



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

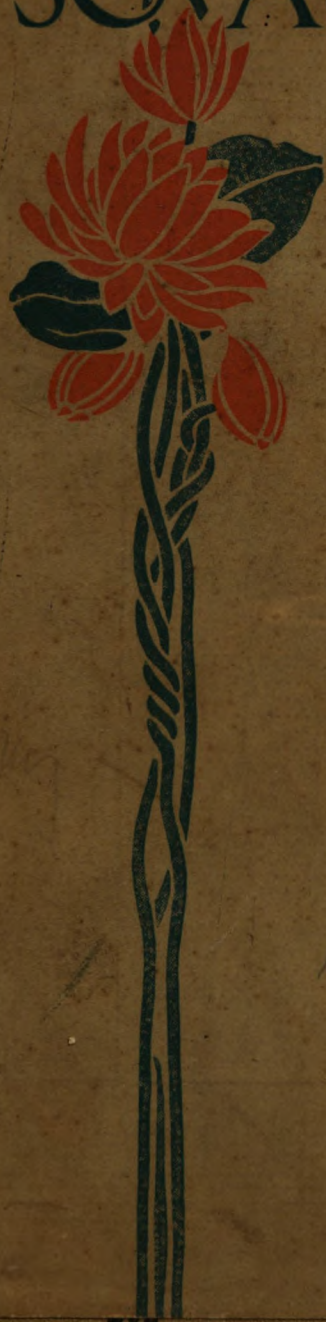
- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

SOAS BY FIRE

JEAN CONNOR



BENZIGER'S MAGAZINE

The Popular Catholic Family Monthly
Recommended by 70 Archbishops and Bishops

*Subscription, \$2.00 a year
3 Years, \$4.00*

What Benziger's Magazine gives its Readers :

Fifty complete stories by the best writers—
equal to a book of 300 pages selling at \$1.25.

Three complete novels of absorbing interest—
equal to three books selling at \$1.25 each.

One thousand beautiful illustrations.

Twenty-five large reproductions of celebrated
paintings.

Twenty articles—equal to a book of 150 pages—
on travel and adventure—on the manners,
customs, and home-life of peoples; on the
haunts and habits of animal life, etc.

Twenty articles—equal to a book of 150 pages—
on our country, historic events, times, places,
important industries.

Twenty articles—equal to a book of 150 pages
—on the Fine Arts; celebrated artists and
their paintings, sculpture, music, etc., and
nature studies.

Twelve pages of Games and Amusements for
in and out of doors.

Fifty pages of Fashions, Fads, and Fancies,
gathered at home and abroad; Helpful
Hints for home workers, household column,
cooking recipes, etc.

"Current Events," the important happenings
over the whole world, described with pen
and pictures.

Prize competitions, in which valuable prizes
are offered.

ORDER BLANK

Messrs. BENZIGER BROTHERS,
36-38 Barclay St., New York

Enclosed please find

\$2 for 1 year's subscription to Benziger's Magazine

\$4 for 3 " " " " " "

which please mail to the following address :

Name

Address

Town

State

Date

950 read in 6th

but (1909), not 1909

R. Catholic (published) - novel.

(CMU)

SO AS BY FIRE

SO AS BY FIRE

BY
JEAN CONNOR



NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO
BENZIGER BROTHERS
PUBLISHERS OF BENZIGER'S MAGAZINE

COPYRIGHT, 1909, BY BENZIGER BROTHERS

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I	
THE WEASEL	7
CHAPTER II	
BARBARA'S PATIENT	24
CHAPTER III	
CALLED HOME	41
CHAPTER IV	
"INTO TEMPTATION"	58
CHAPTER V	
BROKEN BONDS	74
CHAPTER VI	
ROSCROFTE	90
CHAPTER VII	
"TWIXT LIFE AND DEATH"	107
CHAPTER VIII	
NELLIE	125
CHAPTER IX	
ON THE RIVER	141
CHAPTER X	
THE SHADOW OF THE PAST	155

	PAGE
CHAPTER XI	
"UNDINE"	173
CHAPTER XII	
THE WILD WEED'S BLOOM	188
CHAPTER XIII	
UNDER THE PALMS	202
CHAPTER XIV	
THE GLITTER AND THE "GAIN"	218
CHAPTER XV	
THROUGH THE STORM	235
CHAPTER XVI	
THE JUDGE'S SWEETHEART	251
CHAPTER XVII	
A DEATH HOUR	264
CHAPTER XVIII	
"SO AS BY FIRE"	282

SO AS BY FIRE

CHAPTER I

"THE WEASEL"

IT was March, but winter was still making a last stand on the heights, where tattered snow-banners clung to thistle and furze bush, and the wind swept down fierce and blustering, from the bare rocky steeps. The day was gray and cold, but on the Ridge that looked to the south, soft murmurous sounds broke the silence; tricklings and twittering that told the grip of the frost was loosened and that earth was pulsing again to the call of the spring.

Barbara Graeme felt something of the stir even in her chill young veins as she stood at the gate of the Road House, feeding her one pet, the black, broken-winged crow perched on the rotten post beside her. "Rip," named after the somnolent Dutchman of stage and story, was a sorry specimen even of his ill-omened kind, but the girl had found him nearly shot to death in a thicket beside the road two years before, and had nursed him back to crippled life. Rip was her one well-earned

possession on which no one made a claim—not even “grandmother,” who had ruled all things ever since Barbara could remember.

“Poor old Rip!” she murmured as the bird picked fiercely at the dry crust. “You’re hungry, I know. It’s hard foraging this cold weather even for such a natural thief as you. So I stole for you this morning—stole the crusts grandmother was hoarding to break in our bean soup for dinner. Oh, but I’m sick of bean soup, Rip! Sick of broken crusts, sick of it all!”

She shook the wind-blown hair back from her face—a wan young face lighted up by a pair of eyes gray and cold as the March sky. There was little loveliness in form or feature, though she was at the age of girlhood’s full and perfect bloom. She wore a coarse blue “sweater,” that, open at the throat, showed a certain graceful poise of neck and head, and the hair that blew about her face and was gathered in a careless knot was of the reddish gold the old masters loved to paint. Behind her a stretch of weed-grown path led to an old house, long and low, with broken porch and loosened shutters that told of poverty and neglect, a home of which this pale, chill girl seemed the natural outgrowth.

While all around were the pines that held the Ridge for their own, the black-trunked, high-reaching pines, that knew no change or season, but stood always the same, whispering, so it had seemed to Barbara, of the tragedy and mystery that shrouded the Road House in shadow and silence. But to-day there was a stir even in that silence. Was it only the thrill of waking spring? Or something more subtly psychic? One of those vague portents that tell when unseen forces that are to shape our life-course are near.

The girl started and lifted her head with that wild grace which was her only charm as she caught the sound of approaching wheels, and a shabby carryall, driven by a stolid-faced boy, came around the turn of the road. It had been the highway, but the opening of the quarries two miles distant had made a shorter and better route, and it was seldom that any vehicles came past the Road House now.

So Barbara stared indeed as this one drew up at her gate.

"This is the place, miss," said the driver, looking back into the close-curtained seat, and then the door of the carriage was pushed open, and a girl stepped out on the flat stone beside the road.

She was dressed in black, wrapped heavily in a coarse heavy cloak, and the mourning veil she had thrown back showed a pale, delicate face in which deep-ringed eyes shone like stars.

"Do you live here?" she asked eagerly of Barbara.

"Yes," was the brief answer. "I am Barbara Graeme."

"My name is Kent," the stranger went on, "Elinor Kent. I am not very well, and the doctor tells me I must stop working for a while (I have been doing finishing for the factory) and come out here among the pines. They told me at the store down the road that I could get room and board here."

"Here?" Barbara burst into a laugh—an odd laugh that made Rip flutter up in alarm from his post, and perch cautiously on a distant rail.

"Why do you laugh?" asked the newcomer, flushing. "Have I made such a foolish mistake? Is not this the Road House?"

"Yes," was the answer, "but to send you here was a downright mean trick," added Barbara indignantly, as she saw the girl lean panting against the gate-post, shivering in the bleak wind that swept down the Ridge. "We have no board or

lodging for any one," the speaker continued, "but you are cold and tired and we have a fire in the kitchen. You can come in and get warm."

"Thank you," was the faint answer. "I am very, very cold."

And Barbara, who for all her slimness and pallor, was strong and wiry as any lithe woodland thing, put her arm around the tottering girl, and led her in through the dark old cobwebbed hall past half a dozen closed doors, into a low raftered kitchen, where a tall, withered old woman bent over an iron pot swinging in the wide chimney-place.

"Eh—what—who?" She lifted her head and the black eyes that still burned like coals beneath the shaggy gray brows flashed angry question. "Who is it ye are bringing in here, ye Weasel?"

It was Barbara's home name, suggestive of the atmosphere in which she had grown up, to be the lean, sharp-witted starveling she was, hungering for all that young life loves and craves.

"The lady is ill, grandmother," said Barbara. "I brought her in to get warm. Some one sent her here on a fool's errand to find room and board."

"It was at the store, the quarry store," said the stranger, as she sank trembling into the old wooden rocker that Barbara pushed toward her.

"Eh, the quarry store—yes—yes!" The old woman nodded. "It was that fool Daffy Mills. I told him that if the quarrymen wanted the attic they could come."

"The quarrymen!" gasped Barbara. "Oh, grandmother!"

"Eh, and why not then?" was the fierce reply. "It will be good money and better than starving or freezing as we are nigh doing now——"

"The quarrymen!" repeated the girl, indignantly. "Have we come to that, grandmother?"

"Ay, and we are like to come to worse," answered the old woman sharply. "What harm will the men do ye, ye young fool? Ye need see nought of them."

"They are rough, coarse, drinking clowns," said Barbara, bitterly. "Grandmother," she lowered her voice, "let her come instead, if she will."

"It's no place for women," said the old crone, harshly.

The stranger looked up. She had been close to fainting until now.

"I—I am so sorry to have troubled you," she said. "But I had to find a place at once. The doctor said I could not stay another week in town, that I must get to these hills under the pines. He

thought I would find board cheap. I can not pay very much, not more than twenty dollars for the month."

"Twenty dollars!" Barbara looked at her grandmother with startled eyes. When had these starvelings called such a sum their own?

"I've no place for women, I tell ye, Weasel," said the old woman.

"She can have my room," said Barbara, eagerly, catching the note of yielding in the sharp voice. "I will wait on her, grandmother."

Again the half-fainting guest seemed to rouse from the weakness that dazed her.

"I would not ask much," she said. "I take only milk and eggs, and sometimes a little broth."

"It must be pay in advance," said the old woman, gruffly.

"Yes, yes, of course. If you will only let me stay! I am not able to look any further. It will only be for a month. After that," the speaker's pale face brightened, "if the doctor thinks best I will go to Colorado or California, or perhaps the south of France."

California! Colorado! The south of France—and yet she was willing to stay at the Road House! Barbara stared at the frail, pitiful figure leaning

back in the old chair, and wondered if their guest were quite right in her mind. But if it were to keep off the quarrymen with their rude jests and coarse laughter, she felt she could bear even that.

"It's no place for sick women, I warn ye," the old grandmother repeated harshly. "But I can give milk and eggs, and Weasel here, good for naught that she is, may as well wait on ye. So ye can have it your own way."

"Then I will come—I will stay now," said the girl, eagerly. She took out a shabby purse, and small and worn as it was the old woman's greedy eye caught sight of a fair roll of bills within.

"Will you be kind enough to pay the man and ask him to bring in my trunk," the stranger said, giving three dollars to Barbara. Then she handed two ten dollar bills to the old woman, whose withered fingers clutched them with a tremulous greed she could not hide. And eager to secure this strange freak of fortune, Barbara hurried to the gate to bid the driver carry in the little trunk he had brought strapped behind his vehicle.

So Elinor Kent came to the Road House, and Fate, taking up her shuttle, began to weave this frail thread into the loom of Barbara's life—the

life whose course and shape it was to change forever.

* * * * *

"Oh, it is good to be here! I feel better already," said the guest two hours later, as she lay back on the coarse white pillow of Barbara's bed, and looked about the room that, low and wide and bare, had a certain freshness about it that belonged to the hills and the pines. There was a toilet-table, a heavy, old-fashioned chest of drawers, the spotless bed with its patchwork quilt—all plain and poor indeed—but the four windows looked out on wide-reaching vistas of cloud and sky and feathery pine, while Barbara had pulled away the chimney board and built a fire that leaped and blazed cheerily on the brick hearth, filling the room with warmth and glow.

There was a row of books on the mantel, and above them a picture—an old and rare engraving of the Madonna—tacked to the wall, framed in an arch of dried grasses, ferns, and pine cones—evidently the work of Barbara herself. As the sick girl's eye rested on it she smiled and added:

"And I am so glad to find you are Catholics, too."

"Catholics, too!" echoed Barbara, looking up

from the fire she had been fanning into a blaze. "That's another lie of Daffy Mills'. He stuffed you full."

"But—but—" Elinor Kent's gaze turned again to the picture. "Why, then, do you have that?"

"Oh, *that!*" said Barbara, with a little laugh. "I found it upstairs ever so long ago, when I was just a kid. I don't remember my own mother, and I used to make believe it was her picture, though it isn't, of course."

"Of course," assented Elinor, with a smile. "It's the Blessed Virgin——"

"Is it?" asked Barbara, staring. "How do you know?"

"Why, why—" Elinor's own eyes widened in wonder—"don't—don't you know, too?"

"No," answered Barbara. "I never knew who it was. I liked the face—it is so kind, so—so beautiful, like the mother I used to dream of sometimes when I was little and I never had any one but grandmother, who was old and cross. So I put the picture there, to bring back my dreams. But they don't come any more," Barbara added with her little hard laugh. "I'm too old for them now."

"Ah, that's a pity!" said Elinor, softly.

"Oh, I don't know," was the careless answer.

"What's the good of dreams? You just wake up and find they're not true."

Elinor was silent. There seemed a gulf between her and this strange girl which she had not strength to cross. For Barbara, as she soon found, was a young pagan, pure and simple; as much of a pagan as if she had lived before the Star of Bethlehem rose on the sin-darkened world. She had been taught to read and write by her old grandmother, but this was all. Her own mind, keen, restless, wonderfully active, had done its own searching, its own gleaning along scanty fields, its own garnering of fact and fancy, falsehood and truth. There were books in the Road House, a wagonload of them, flung in dust and disorder up in the old attic, and Barbara had read what and how she pleased.

Into this strange, hard, lonely, unlovely young life Elinor Kent came, frail, gentle, helpless—waking Barbara's pity and interest. She held to her word. Grandmother might mutter and mumble as she willed, but Barbara waited on their guest as she had promised. Elinor's room was aired and sunned, the fire in the brick chimney-place burned cheerily, though Barbara had sometimes to wrench the old rotten timbers from

ruined barn and outhouse to keep it ablaze. The nests behind the house were watched for the new-laid eggs, and Barbara herself milked the old dun cow that had drawn scanty sustenance all winter from the dry grass in the hollow.

And Elinor, who was a gentle, kindly little creature, who had walked feebly along life's weary way, soon learned to cling to Barbara as the weak ones cling to the strong.

"You are too good to me, Bobby, dear," she said gratefully, as Barbara brought up the rich, frothing milk to the window, where the pale invalid sat in the brightening sun.

"Too good! Not a bit—you are paying for it," answered Barbara, bluntly.

"Oh no! I couldn't pay for what you give me," was the earnest answer. "Not yet—though some day, some day, Bobby, I can."

"Oh, you needn't—we're square," said Barbara, with her little hard laugh.

"But I will, I will," Elinor went on eagerly. "I can never forget you, Bobby. When grandfather sends for me I will send for you."

"Won't that be crowding things rather for the old gentleman?" asked Barbara, lightly.

"Oh, no, no," Elinor went on, the hectic flush

brightening on her transparent cheek. "He will do anything I ask, I am quite sure. For you know, Bobby," and then for the twentieth time the sick girl began to discuss, with feverish delight, the story of her hopes, the radiant hopes that were sustaining her in face of disappointment, disease, and death. Her mother, whose maiden name was Elinor Randall, had made a reckless young love match with a poor music teacher, Maurice Kent, far beneath her in birth and position. For a while Judge Randall, a proud old aristocrat, whose family had held enviable rank in his native State since the days of the Calverts, had refused to receive or forgive the young lovers, being especially indignant at the husband, whom he felt had abused his privileges as a teacher by secretly winning the affections of a pupil scarcely seventeen.

But when within a year of the marriage the young wife died in giving birth to a little daughter, the grandfather had softened with grief and remorse, and offered to take the child and bring it up as his own, giving the little Elinor her mother's name and place. This the father, sore and bitter in his own grief, refused. Harsh words passed between the two, and the breach widened instead of closed.

Maurice Kent took his child to his own people, and she grew up in their humble sphere. Life was a struggle with her father always, and at an early age she had to begin to earn her own bread, knowing little of her mother's family and never having seen any of its members.

The grandmother who had brought up the young Elinor died when she was only ten. The aunt who, for a while, took her mother's place, married and went to live in Germany. Maurice Kent and his daughter were left to make their way alone, through a world in which the musician, disappointed and unsuccessful in all things, had neither friends nor place. Elinor, a skilful needlewoman, had been able to get work in the finer lines of factories, while her father took minor parts in orchestras or taught when he could at cheapest rates.

Six months before he had died, after a few weeks' illness, and realizing at the end the cruel mistakes of his life, he had written to Judge Randall, giving to him the daughter he had asked for eighteen years before, and begging him to care for and protect his dead Elinor's child.

On this letter, written five months previous, and unanswered still, the frail invalid, fading hourly

away in the Road House, was building airy castles of hope and joy that Barbara had not the heart to shake with a doubting word. For the little "Weasel" of the Road House had grown up in the loveless darkness, where one learns to doubt and fear and distrust, and only the new pity she felt for Elinor's weakness made her patient with what she thought were a sick girl's fever dreams.

"I will hear from them soon now, Bobby, I am sure. Perhaps the letter has miscarried, or grandfather may have been away from home. In Europe, maybe. Oh, how lovely it will be to travel with him, Bobby! The doctor said a sea voyage would do me good. But I think, when I get to Rosecrofte, I will never want to leave it. Papa told me about it at the last, when he was ill and I was so broken-hearted at being left alone. Then he talked to me about the lovely home I would have when he was gone. The Randalls have lived there for two hundred years, and there are great oaks all around the house, and lawns like green velvet, and roses everywhere. Oh Bobby, I do so love roses, and I never had a handful of them in all my life. Did you?"

"Never," answered Barbara, grimly.

"And inside, the rooms are all wide and high,

with big windows that look far away down to the shining river. Papa said my poor young mama seemed to be dreaming of that river when she died. And there is a great wide hall hung with pictures, old, old portraits—men with curls and ruffs about their necks, and my grandmothers and great-grandmothers with their high puffed hair and queer gowns, and everybody, back to Sir Roger Randall, who lost his head for the King! Such proud, great people papa said—but mama left all for love of him."

Barbara was silent. She had her own opinion of mama's folly, but kept it wisely to herself.

"But now I will have her place, as papa told me. It has never been taken, for she was the only daughter, and though Uncle Gilbert married, his wife never could be the same to grandfather as mama. I will have the beautiful rooms that have been closed ever since she left home. No one had the heart to use them, for they had been fitted up for her. Oh, Bobby! I just lie awake at night thinking of it all, it makes me forget the pain in my breast, and—and—" The speaker was stopped by a fit of coughing.

"There, now, you've been talking too much!" said Barbara, sharply, for she saw that the hand-

kerchief Elinor pressed to her lips was stained deep with blood, and there was a hoarse croak at the window as Rip, who had been eying his mistress from the sill without, with a flap of black wings fluttered away.

CHAPTER II

BARBARA'S PATIENT

"AND there—there was no letter, Bobby?" asked Elinor, turning wistfully on her pillow. She had been in bed three days now, for the red stain on the handkerchief had weakened her sadly.

"No," said Barbara, "none yet. But I'll go down again this evening and see."

"Oh, no, you needn't, you needn't," said the sick girl, wearily. "I know you hate to go to the quarry-store, Bobby, dear."

"Oh, I don't mind it so much now, the men are not there—there is a preacher at the Union Hall, and they are all crowding to hear him. He is a new sort out here. Wears a long black gown, and has a cross stuck in his belt and has sworn off marrying, Daffy Mills says, so he can just travel around and preach and pray. Told the men how he had been in China and Japan and out among the cannibals and everywhere. They call him Father. Queer, ain't it?" said Barbara, with her little odd laugh. "Father Lane."

"Oh, then he is a priest!" said Elinor with a catch in her breath.

"Priest or preacher, it's all the same, isn't it?" said Barbara, as she twisted up the coil of red gold hair that had tumbled down in her brisk race over the hills.

"Oh, no—they are not—not the same at all," answered Elinor, quickly.

"What's the difference?" asked Barbara, jabbing her broken comb into the rippling tresses, knotted now in her usual careless style.

"A great deal," answered Elinor. "I can't explain it to you, Bobby, because I'm not very much of a Catholic myself. But mama was one, and she made papa promise I should be one, too, so he did his best. I went to Catholic Sunday-school and church whenever I went anywhere, and I wouldn't be anything but a Catholic for the world, and if I were very sick I'd send for a priest."

"Would you?" asked Barbara. "What for?"

"So that he would help me—help me to die," answered Elinor, with a shudder. "Oh, I know what dying is! I saw papa, and I'm afraid, I'm afraid. Last night I woke up in the dark and I felt so cold, so queer, Bobby! My breath didn't

come right, and my heart was jumping—and I thought I was going to die, too, before—before the letter could reach me, and that I might never, never see Rosecrofte after all.”

“What’s the good of thinking things like that?” said Barbara. “I’ll make a bed up on the floor and come down here and sleep to-night.”

“Oh, if you would, if you would, Bobby,” said the sick girl gratefully. “And if you don’t mind—I get nervous lying here, Bobby—will you look in the corner of my trunk, and see if the black box is all right. Papa told me to be careful of it, very careful, and last night I had a dreadful dream that it was gone. It holds all dear mama’s papers and letters, and the certificates of my birth and baptism—all that proves I am mama’s child. And there’s money there—all that is left of papa’s little insurance. I got two hundred dollars when he died.”

“It’s all right,” said Barbara, as, humoring the sick girl’s nervous fears, she looked in at her poor little treasure-box. “Everything is safe, and I’ll lock it up again as you can see. Now for goodness’ sake turn over and go to sleep. I won’t listen to another word or you’ll be coughing up blood again,” and Barbara turned her back resolutely,

and with her little thin face resting on her hands stared out of the window, a pang in her heart—a strange, chilling pang such as she had never felt before.

For Elinor was dying—dying slowly, but surely, as both Barbara and Rip, croaking harshly on the ledge beneath the window, knew.

And down in the black raftered kitchen the old grandmother croaked in still harsher tone. “She’ll be dead on our hands before the month is up. It is all your doings, ye Weasel. You would have her instead of the quarrymen that would have gone off to their work the morn and given no trouble. And now there will be waking and burying and all sorts of work. And who’s to pay for it? For the girl has neither kith nor kin to call in, it’s plain. Who’s to pay, say I?”

“You needn’t worry,” said Barbara slowly, and there was a somber light in the cold gray eyes. “There will be money and kin both, if half she tells me is true.”

“Eh, what—what is that ye say?” asked the old woman, shrilly.

And then more to quiet her grandmother’s sharp tongue than for any faith she put in Elinor’s hopes, Barbara told the sick girl’s story, the old crone

listening with greedy interest kindling her sunken eyes.

"And do ye believe it?" she scoffed. "Do you believe all this grand story, ye young fool?"

"No," answered Barbara, "I don't—I don't believe that anything good or lucky ever happens. But she does. She believes her grandfather is going to forgive and forget all the bitterness in his hard old heart—that he is going to send for her and take this girl he has never seen or cared for all these years into her dead mother's place in his home. That she is going among roses and trees and everything beautiful forever. She believes it all." Barbara drew a long, resolute breath. "I am going to let her die believing it all, if I can."

And with this declaration, against which even fierce old Granny Graeme felt there was no appeal, Barbara sped off to the nests in the hollow to find the fresh-laid eggs for Elinor's lunch.

All through the afternoon she coddled and watched and scolded by turn, for Elinor had grown restless and nervous as the rainbow of hope darkened in the shadow creeping slowly but surely on. It was Barbara who built up the airy dream-castles now.

"If you are going to give up like this you won't

have the strength to travel when your letter comes—as it may any minute. It's nearly a thousand miles from here to Rosecroft, you know; we measured it on the railroad map last week. But you will go in a parlor car, of course, and maybe some of your folks will meet you half-way. And it will be almost summer-time there, I suppose, and you can just live out doors."

"Oh, yes, yes, I will." The sick girl caught feverishly at these shining hopes. "I will stay out under the big oaks. And the roses will soon be in bloom, and the honeysuckle. Papa said it grew all over the south porch."

"And they will have horses," continued Barbara; "and you can ride and drive whenever you please."

"Oh, I believe I would rather sail," said Elinor; "just drift down the beautiful shining river, Bobby. It would seem so much easier."

"Would it?" asked Barbara. "Well, I'm not much on drifting. I'd rather ride, ride fast and hard on a galloping horse that could go like the wind. But you can take your choice. That's the luck of rich people; they can drive or drift just as they please."

"And dress as they please," added Elinor, roused to interest again. "Bobby, when I go to Rose-

crofte I don't think I'll ever wear anything but white. I'm so tired of dull, dingy clothes. Of course I can't put on colors yet because I am in mourning for poor papa, but I can wear white, soft, cloudy dresses and pretty white ribbons. And flowers! oh, I will always have flowers—big bunches of them on my breast or in my belt. Oh, if the letter would only come! Sometimes I feel as if I must get up and go anyhow. I have the money, you know. Just go and tell grandfather who I am and say to him, 'I have come home.' But papa would not hear of that. He told me I must wait—wait until I heard from them—wait until they called me back to my mother's home. And they will, they will! Don't you think they will, Bobby?" asked the trembling voice wistfully.

"Of course they will," said Barbara, lying without hesitation, like the remorseless little pagan she was. "And if you will promise to keep still and not worry, I'll go down to the post-office to see if the letter is there now."

And shaking up the pillow from which poor Elinor could scarcely lift her weary head, shading the west window through which the sunset light was streaming in a golden flame, Barbara started off on her quest.

It had only been three brief weeks since Elinor's coming, but the last triumph of retreating winter had died on the hills, and through the bare arcades of the forest, over the breeze-swept hills, spring was stepping softly, as yet a fair pale vestal uncrowned and unthroned.

But her call was in the air, and all the mighty forces of sun and soil and stream were gathering loyally to her standard. Beyond the stern zone of the pines, the oaks and the maples were in bud, the grass was green in the sheltered hollows where the late snows had lingered; the "burn," as Barbara's old Scotch grandfather had christened the little stream that bounded his place, leaped and foamed over the rocks.

But the "Resurrext" sounding through the waking woods found no echo in Barbara's heart. All was revolt, fierce, dumb, despairing revolt against the law to which all humanity must bow—the law of sorrow, suffering, death. Elinor was dying, and battle for her as Barbara might, with all the fierce energy that the sick girl's helplessness had awakened, there was no hope. And for pagan Barbara there was no light in the darkness, no star in the night. Death was only shroud, coffin, grave, the black, hideous end of all to which young life clings.

The awful horror of it was upon her as she sped over the springing grass and under the budding trees, past the brown fields upturned for the spring planting, by the old Dutch gardener's, where rows of white hyacinths and Annunciation lilies were in hothouse bloom, to the quarries that gashed the mountain-side with black clefts and yawning chasms, and crushed all green growing things under mighty heaps and stretches of broken stone.

Barbara had always hated the quarries since they were opened in the mountains six years before, bringing drill and blast and harsh discord where all had been sweet stillness and peace. But the works had grown with every year. A score or more of little cabins dotted the rocks, there was the quarry store, with its post-office, the Union Hall, a rough, board building used for all public purposes, and where the "preaching" or three days' mission to the quarry hands was being held now. It was after six o'clock and the store, to Barbara's great satisfaction, was quite deserted.

Only Daffy Mills, the sandy-haired manager, stood behind the counter measuring a quart of molasses for little Fritzie Wonn, the Dutch gardener's twelve-year-old boy.

"Oh, back again, are ye?" greeted Daffy, as Bar-

bara entered in breathless haste. "Well, it's no good; there ain't no letter come."

"Is the last mail in?" asked Barbara, sinking down on an upturned box near the door.

"Yes," answered Daffy, "half an hour ago. You're drefful anxious about that letter, seems to me, Weasel. What is it to you?"

"None of your business," answered Barbara, sharply. "And don't call me by that horrid name, Daffy Mills. I hate it."

"Miss—Miss—Miss Graeme," stammered young Fritzie, taking warning by this reproof, "you ain't a-wanting to sell that crow of yours yet, are you?"

"No, I ain't," said Barbara, quickly. "I've told you so a dozen times, haven't I?"

"I'll give ye two dollars for him now," said Fritzie. "Father says he knows how to split his tongue and make him talk almost like a parrot."

"You can't have him if you were to pay me twenty dollars," said Barbara, who was in no mood for either friendly or business conversation this evening. "Split the bird's tongue, you cruel little wretch! Not for your life."

"It wouldn't hurt him much, father says," continued the stolid Fritzie. "And I guess he'd like to talk. I would if I was a crow."

"Well, you can't have him, so that ends it," said Barbara, impatiently. "Give me a pound of rice, Daffy Mills, and I'll go."

"Oh, don't be in a hurry," said Daffy. "If you will wait until Jake Brown comes back from the preaching I'll take you home."

"I don't want you," said Barbara, bluntly.

"And all-fired good preaching it is," continued the unabashed Daffy. "I do like to hear it myself, but somebody has to keep store, so I let Jake go because he's Papist on his mother's side, while our folks has allus been Baptist straight through. I've allus heard these here Pope's priests preached in Latin, but this one gives ye plain English hard and fast as ye can take it and sort of entertainin' too," continued Daffy as he weighed out Barbara's rice. "He's been most everywhere, the boys say, among the Injuns and Chinooks and cannibals. Was shut up in a cage with a wooden collar around his neck for three months in some of these heathen lands. And though there ain't much shouting or praying or mourning going on, he's a-hauling the boys in hand over fist. There was a good fifty of them stayed up there professing or confessing with him half of last night. I tell you the Sperrit is a-stirring over tnis here place, sure. Why, Micky

Blake come over this morning and give me sixty-eight cents he had sneaked from the till four months ago. I tell you, when religion hits you like that it's a-sticking in. This here Father Lane is a winner, you bet. And he don't stop for nothing, either. Why, Jake says when he heard that Tom Dealey's old bedridden mother was a-crying and praying to see him he got on a horse and rode the good ten miles to Durham so the poor old critter could die in peace."

"And did she?" asked Barbara, who had been listening to this narration with breathless interest. "Did he help her to die in—in peace?"

"Well, she ain't—so to say—dead yet," answered Daffy. "But it's 'most as good as if she was. For Tom said there was no living with the old woman, she had got that crooked and cross and cantankerous, and since the priest has been to see her she has quieted down peaceful as a lamb——"

"The girl at our house is—is dying," said Barbara. "Do you think he would go and—and help her?"

Daffy hesitated. The Road House, with its shadow, its blight, its fierce-eyed, sharp-tongued old chatelaine, was not a place to invite venture,

even from a missionary who had braved cage and cangue——

"She is his sort," continued Barbara, eagerly. "I mean she is a Catholic, or Papist, or whatever you call them. And she said if she were very sick she would want a priest to come and help her to die." The speaker's voice trembled over the word as Daffy never had heard it tremble before. "And——and she is——dying now."

"Did the doctor say so?" asked Daffy.

"Yes——just as much. He said he couldn't do any good. And perhaps——" Barbara was still young enough to catch at any whisper of hope——"perhaps this preacher might——"

"He might," assented Daffy, who found this new tone of appeal in the sharp-voiced Weasel most attractive. "'Twouldn't do any harm to ask him, anyhow. The preaching will be over in about half an hour now. He gives it to them short and often, which is the right ticket round here. The boys wouldn't stand for a protracted meeting like the Methodys gave last year down at the Cut. Takes too much provender," added Daffy sagely. "Why, after them there circuit riders had spent a good two weeks a-watching with the mourners, there wasn't a cooking chicken for a mile down the

Cut. So you wait, Weasel—I mean Miss Barbara, and I'll walk home with you if you'll let me." Daffy was leaning over the counter now, his keen but honest blue eyes fixed on the girl, who, with her faded sunbonnet on her lap, sat staring moodily out of the open door. "What are you so down in the mouth about this 'ere boarder of yours for anyhow?" he asked. "She ain't anything to you."

"No, she isn't," was the bitter answer. "You needn't tell me that, Daffy Mills. There is nobody in the world anything to me."

"There is somebody who would like to be, though," said Daffy eagerly. "I don't know why you are so mean to me, Weas—I mean Miss Barbara, when—when I care for you so much. Durned if I can tell why it is, but my heart begins to pit-a-pat whenever I see you coming. And just to have you setting there on that old soap-box does me more good than taking in a five dollar bill."

The sharp answer, that was as natural to Barbara as the prickle to the rose, died on her lips. In the chill new shadow deepening around her the light in Daffy's honest eyes seemed a gleam from some far-off sun, to which all young life turns.

"You are such—such a fool, Daffy," she said in a tone that softened the rude words strangely.

"I guess I am, Weasel—there, I've said it again—but it's the name I've always known you by since the first day you came, a little white, cold, sharp-eyed kid to the store for a bar of soap. I gave you a sugar-topped bun, for I thought—I thought you looked sort of hungry, and you flung it back at my head. Do you remember——"

"Yes," answered Barbara. "I wasn't a beggar—and I told you so."

"You did," said Daffy, with a chuckle. "Seems as if that ere sperrit and pluck of yours took me then and there, Weasel. For I had heard things, you know," Daffy spoke hesitatingly, as if he felt he were on dangerous ground, "and knew it was pretty tough on a pale, lonely little critter up at the Road House. Lord, you don't know how I used to long, those days, to take you in here behind the counter and give you a good warm feed. And that ar feeling has been a-growing and growing on me, Weasel, till now—now—" Daffy drew a long breath as if he needed stronger voice—"now there's nothing on God's earth I want so much as you, Weasel, to work for and care for; and keep safe and warm and comfortable all your life. And

I can do it, too. I've got two thousand dollars saved, and I'm going to put every cent in a machine I've been studying out here, behind the counter of nights, a machine for grinding stone. I'll be able to take care of you fine. You shan't stay around here, neither. I'll put you in a pretty house, all new and bright and shining, where you will bloom like a rose."

"No, I wouldn't," answered Barbara, and the cold gray eyes she lifted to Daffy had no answering light in them. "I would be all thorns."

"I'd risk it, by Ginger, I'd risk it," said Daffy, bringing his hand down with a great thump on the counter. "Thorn or rose, you are the only girl in the world for me. And if you'll say the word, Weasel, if you'll only say the word——"

"What word?" she interrupted him, with her little hard laugh. "That I will marry you, Daffy Mills, marry you, to be kept clothed and fed and warm? No, I won't," she said, firing up into sudden wrath. "I'll never marry any one for that. I'd rather starve, and freeze, and die. And—and——" she stopped suddenly as she caught the look in Daffy's eyes. "I guess you mean all right, but marry you— I'd rather die, I tell you, I'd rather

die! There!" She started to her feet and flung her faded sunbonnet on her head. "The preaching is over. I am going to ask the priest to come with me to the Road House right now."

CHAPTER III

CALLED HOME

THE three days' mission at the Graystone quarry had been a success. There was neither priest nor church within twenty-five miles, and men and women had crowded eagerly to the good missionary's feet. He would have been glad to have lengthened his stay, but "fields white with the harvest" called this earnest laborer on. Father Lane knelt for a few moments at the foot of the little portable altar that had been erected in the bare stretches of "Union Hall," while his congregation passed out after the evening service, which he had wisely arranged so as to catch the quarry men before they scattered to their sometimes distant homes for the night. As he arose from his knees he noticed a girl waiting at the open door, a girl whose coarse clothing showed no touch of the tawdry finery common to her class. She had pushed a faded sunbonnet back from her face and was staring with evident surprise at the altar and tapers and cross, that for a time sanctified the poor bare hall.

"You're—you're the preacher, I guess," she said, stepping forward to meet him.

"I am Father Lane," he answered, and the kind smile on the worn face was reassuring to the questioner. "Is there anything I can do for you, my child?"

"There is a girl at our house very sick—dying, I think. Will—will you come see her?"

"Certainly," was the prompt answer. "Is she a Catholic?"

"Yes," answered Barbara.

"Is it very far?" asked Father Lane.

"About a mile across the short cut. I'll show you the way, that is, if you think you can help her any. She said you could help her to die. It's hard on her, you see—and—and she is afraid," explained Barbara, who felt oddly shy and abashed under the grave eyes fixed upon her so kindly.

"Poor child, poor child!" Father Lane consulted an old silver watch he took from his pocket. "It is right then to go at once. Sit down here on the steps and wait for me. I will be ready in a few moments."

Barbara sat down to wait, under the disapproving eye of Barney Flynn, acting sacristan, sexton, and general manager of the temporary chapel.

"Shure, Father, an' it's not—not on a sick call ye are going wid *her*?" exclaimed Barney, as he saw the priest making his preparations.

"Yes—why not? There is a poor girl dying at her house who is asking for a priest——"

"At *her* house!" repeated Barney in dismay. "The Road House! What call has any Christian to be dying there? It's black haythins the Graemes have been always—ay and worse. Arrah, don't ye know, Father, that——"

"I only know that I have been called to a dying bed," interrupted Father Lane, "and that is all a priest asks. That girl is not deceiving me, I am sure."

"Shure, I can't say anything against Weasel Graeme," said Barney, "but the ould grandmother is as fierce as a mountain wildcat. She has been half mad, the people say, since that boy of hers, Buck Graeme, as they called him——"

"Never mind the family history now, Barney," interrupted Father Lane gently. "I must go at once so as to return in time to hear confessions. It is my last night here and every moment is precious."

And the speaker hurried back to the steps where Barbara sat awaiting him.

"I am ready now, my child. Take the shortest road, for we have no time to lose."

Like one roused from a dream the girl sprang to her feet at his bidding, and led the way, striking at once into a forest path, where the last rays of sunset streamed through interlacing boughs, bare, indeed, as yet, but tremulous with springtime promise.

A few brief questions drew from Barbara her relations with the sick girl, who from her far home in the Northwest had drifted down to these mountain ridges, in a pitiful search for health.

"She is expecting her mother's folks to send for her, but they won't, I know."

And Father Lane wondered a little at the tone, it was so cold and hard; wondered more at the young face, that showed already traces of strength and will strange to a girl of eighteen.

"Here is our place," said his guide, as the forest path opened into the wide, weed-grown road, and the half-ruined old house rose black against the sunset. "You mustn't mind if grandmother is cross. She's that way to everybody."

But happily for Father Lane's welcome the old woman was out. She had gone off as she some-

times did without any notice, leaving old black Huldah.

"An' bress de Lord you'se come, chile," said old Huldah. "Dat pore young critter is monstrous bad; she been a-crying and praying for you to come back."

And then while Father Lane, who had followed his guide into the black raftered kitchen, pitifully noted the forbidding gloom that darkened this young life, Barbara ran upstairs to prepare Elinor for his coming.

"Oh, Bobby, I am so glad, so glad," and the dying girl flung her feeble arms about Barbara's neck. "I am dying, I know—you know it too, Bobby. God bless you for bringing me comfort and help."

"I will see her alone, my child," Father Lane said, and Barbara sat out on the broken step of the old porch, wondering, while the last red glow in the west faded, the shadows deepened under the pines, and the twilight came on with one bright star, for which Elinor watched every evening, shining through a break in the trees.

Rip fluttered from the rail of the porch to his mistress' knee, and Barbara stroked his broken wing softly.

"Fritzie Wonn wants to make you talk, Rip, but we won't have it, will we? You're better as you are. There's no use in talking, or thinking, or—or grieving, Rip. It's better just to be an old black crow."

"Well, well, you have an odd pet, indeed!" said a kindly voice as Father Lane stepped out on the porch beside her. "How did you tame the rascal?"

"He is not tamed," answered Barbara. "He is just broken-winged."

"Ah, that's different," said the priest, smiling. "A great many of us are tame only because we are broken-winged."

"How is she?" asked Barbara abruptly. "Have you helped her any?"

"Yes," he answered gravely. "I think I have. I wish I could come to see her again, but it is impossible. I leave Graystone early to-morrow morning. And if—if—I really forget the poor child's name——"

"Elinor," said Barbara, who had risen, and still holding Rip was looking up at the speaker eagerly. "Elinor Kent."

"If she continues ill I think it will be well to send her to the Sisters' Hospital at A——, where she will receive every care, temporal and spiritual.

I have left her a card which will gain her admittance there whenever she wishes to go. And now I must thank you for coming for me, and say good evening."

"I'll show you the way back," said Barbara.

"No need, no need," was the cheering answer. "I have been among the Indians long enough to learn how to follow any trail I once have trodden, and your little wood path is well marked. Stay with your friend and may God bless you, my child—may God bless you," Father Lane repeated earnestly, as he shook Barbara's hand in a warm, friendly grasp, and turned away into the deepening shadows.

For a moment the girl stood watching the disappearing figure, while those last words echoed like strange music in her ear. She had been cursed many a time, but never—never in all her dreary remembrance, had Barbara Graeme been blessed.

Then shaking Rip from her arm she went on upstairs to the room where Elinor lay white and still, watching the star shining in her window through the gap in the pines.

"Bobby dear," she whispered, "I am so happy, so happy! I have been away from God so long—

I have been so careless, so forgetful. And now—now—oh, I can't talk just yet, Bobby. Just sit down here near me and let me hold your hand."

And awed, she knew not why, by this strange quiet, Barbara sat down by the bed and held the little chill hand, while night came on, and the stillness deepened, and the white star shone brighter for the darkness that shrouded the old Road House in such hopeless gloom.

Elinor lay calm and still but very weak. So weak that Barbara had to bend close to catch her whispers.

"I am not afraid now, Bobby—not afraid. Father Lane said I must not be—that God was so good, and life had been so hard. I—I—couldn't tell him much about Rosecrofte, you see, but oh, Bobby, I feel the letter is coming soon now—very, very soon? I'll never have to go to the hospital, Bobby. The letter will come calling me home."

"Of course it will," said Barbara stoutly, "it can't be very long now."

"And I'll be so good when I get home, Bobby. I'll never be careless or forgetful again. It will be so easy to be good there. I won't have to work,

you know—work when I am cold and sick and faint. I will get well and strong, won't I, Bobby dear?"

"So well and strong you'll forget you were ever sick, I guess," said Barbara, with a queer forced little laugh.

"Oh, no, no! I won't forget—I'll remember it always, and—and it will only make me happier—and I'll remember you, Bobby—and—and make you happy, too, if I can."

"There, now, don't talk any more." Barbara's voice was a bit husky as she spoke. "Go to sleep and dream about it all."

"I will," whispered Elinor faintly. "Oh, Bobby, just think of living among trees and flowers—it will be summer-time when I get there, you know—all kinds of flowers—and the river! It seems as if I could hear the river now."

"No, you don't," said Barbara with sudden sharpness. "It's only the wind in the pines——"

And then the cruel fit of coughing came on and Barbara lifted the struggling girl in her arms while she gasped for breath and life. And so between hope and fear the battle with death waged on through the long hours of darkness, old Huldah coming up ever and anon with draughts of warm

milk and bottles of hot water—a croaking, dismal presence on the gloomy scene.

“She’s a-gwine fast, honey, she’s a-gwine fast. De deaf pinch is on her face now. Don’t you go breathing her breaf, chile, or ’twill cotch you nex’, and you’ll be dead befo’ de change ob de moon.”

Yet when the morning came on flushed and dewy with hope and light, Elinor lay back on her pillow wan and weak indeed from the struggle, but the young life within her unvanquished still.

Leaving her sleeping in old Huldah’s care, Barbara, white and worn and shaken by the vigil of the night, stepped out on the porch for a breath of the glad morning air. As she stood leaning against the old rotten pillars, like the frail, blighted blossom of this ill-omened roof-tree that she was, the clatter of horse’s hoofs came swiftly down the road.

“Daffy!” she cried, startled, and the eager lover of the previous day drew rein at her gate.

“Here it is!” he said, waving a white envelope. “It came by the first mail, and as I was going to town I came to bring it to you, Weasel. Here is the letter you have been looking for so long for Miss Elinor Kent. Good luck to you with it,”

added Daffy, showing his white teeth in the pleasant smile that was his only attraction, and tossing the letter over the gate he galloped on.

Barbara sprang to pick it up. The letter indeed! Stained and travel-worn and stamped with a dozen postmarks that told of its wanderings. The long watched for, hoped for, prayed for letter—the letter that called the dying Elinor home! And a great tremulous wave of joy surged over Barbara's heart, warming and stirring its chilled pulses as they had never been warmed and stirred before. She bounded into the dark hall, up the stairs, and then paused, suddenly conscious that her news might startle Elinor too rudely. But hesitation was useless.

"I heard, I heard!" cried the sick girl, in sharp, tremulous tone. "The letter has come! Give it to me, Bobby, give it to me." And she started up on her pillow with feverish strength, and tore open the envelope.

"'My dear, dear child, my Elinor's child,'" she began. "Oh, it is from grandfather, from grandfather!" she said, breaking off rapturously. "Thank God, thank God. At last, at last, Bobby!" Then the glad tone suddenly grew sharp and strained. "It has all turned black. I—I can't

see! Read it for me, read quick— Oh, my God—” And Bobby caught the struggling, sinking figure in her arms, while the blood gushed forth from the quivering lips, the failing life torrent that bore Elinor Kent’s sweet, broken spirit home.

* * * * *

“An’ didn’t I tell ye,” croaked Gran, who had come home, as she always did, with a fiercer light in her sunken eye, a sharper edge to her tongue, “didn’t I tell ye what would come of taking in a half-dead girl? Ay, but ye’re like that white, mealy-faced mother of yours that stood up for her own will and way agin us all! And now we’ve got the corpse on our hands, and who is to do the waking an’ the burying? I’ll make it none of my business, I can swear to that.”

“You needn’t,” said Barbara, sternly, though all the young heart within her was a-quiver with strange new pain. “She left money in her trunk that will pay for all that she needs, and, besides, you know, there is her grandfather——”

“Eh, what—who—where?” asked Gran, who had come back an hour after Elinor, under old Huldah’s pitying touch, had been laid white and cold in Barbara’s darkened room upstairs.

"She got the letter at last," continued Barbara dully. "And it killed her."

"What letter are ye talking about, ye fool? It's your own wits that are gone, too, I'm thinking. It's half daft you've been looking all day, like the girl herself."

"Oh, grandmother, no, she wasn't daft at all. It was all true, all that she said," and the quiver in Barbara's heart found eager voice for the pale, silent figure that could speak no more. "It was all true, grandmother. Her grandfather sent for her as she said he would, and if she had lived she could have gone to him and been rich and happy in the beautiful home she talked about. And now, now, she is dead and can have nothing—nothing of all that was waiting for her; nothing but a grave."

"Did ye read the letter?" asked Gran, doubtfully.

"No," answered Barbara. "She died, and—and—I couldn't——"

"Go find it," said Gran, with the fierce command that had ruled the Road House for fifty years. And Barbara went upstairs to the darkened room that seemed so cold and still now that the battle for life was over and all the pain and

outcry and piteous struggle hushed in a solemn calm.

The slender little form on the bed had been covered with a sheet, and all things were in strange, stiff order, for old Huldah, like all her race, took grisly satisfaction in the service that adds to the chill pageantry of death.

The old negress had gone now, but carefully folded on the table beside the bed was the letter that had fluttered from Elinor's dying grasp. As Barbara took it up she saw with a sick shudder that the edge of the white paper was still wet with blood, but she brought it to her old grandmother, as she had been told.

"Read it now," said the old woman, and in a low voice that all her strength could not steady Barbara read:

ROSECROFTE, March —.

"MY DEAR, DEAR CHILD, MY ELINOR'S CHILD:—

"Your father's last sad letter has just reached me after many weeks of delay, for I, with your Uncle Gilbert's family, have just returned from a six months' trip to the south of Europe. I would telegraph to you if possible, but it is most likely that a letter will find you, as no doubt if you have moved from Millboro, you have thought to leave

your post-office address. Come to us at once. Your poor father wrote that he left you the means for the journey, so fulfill the last wishes dictated by an honest pride, which perhaps in the past I misunderstood.

"But all mistakes and misapprehensions, however bitter, are over now. Henceforth you are all our own. Your mother's home is waiting for you—your mother's name, if you please to take it, your mother's place.

"So, my little Elinor, come to me. Come and fill the aching heart your mother left sore and empty twenty years ago. Come to brighten and gladden and bless your old grandfather's life. Telegraph us when you reach B—— and we will meet you at our own station and bring you joyfully home.

"Affectionately, my own dear child,

"ROGER B. RANDALL."

"Eh, what—what?" cried old Gran, shrilly. "Roger B. Randall, ye say, girl? Read it again, read it again, I say."

"Roger B. Randall," repeated Barbara, staring at the old woman, who, crouching down as she was, withered and broken with the weight of her bitter years, had still a certain tense power, as if,

like the old mountain wildcat people called her, she could at need spring and tear and kill.

"Roger Randall!" echoed the old woman, and she burst into a laugh, a harsh, hideous laugh that showed her long yellow broken fangs, and narrowed her sunken eyes to a mere gleaming line, a laugh that every black rafter of the old kitchen seemed to echo mockingly.

"Roger B. Randall! And so it's him that is calling the pretty white dove upstairs back to him, is it? It's Roger Randall's grandchild that came to old Rachel Graeme's to die! Ha, ha, ha!" And again she broke into fierce, discordant mirth that made her listener's flesh creep.

"Why, why—do you know him?" Barbara asked breathlessly.

"Do I know him?" echoed the old woman. "I do, girl, I do. Or I did fifty years ago. Ay, and he is all that she said, proud and grand and rich and great, and hard, hard when he chooses to be, as the white marble over the dead. And that starveling, that poor puling thing we took in, is Roger Randall's grandchild! The grandchild that he has never seen, never known! How was it, how was it? Tell me all, girl, tell me all!"

And Barbara, who had been ruled by this fierce

old grandmother all her young life, told Elinor's story as she had heard it again and again from the dead girl's lips; told it as she saw it to-day in all its piteous pathos.

"And she had to die," concluded Barbara bitterly, "she had to die just when she could have had everything. If it had only been me now," she added drearily, "it wouldn't have made much difference. Pity I couldn't have died in her place."

"Died—in her place!" the old grandmother caught the girl's arm in a fierce, shaking clutch, while her sunken eyes flashed into sudden light. "Weasel! Weasel! What's to keep you from living in that dead girl's place, ye young fool? They've never seen her, they'll know no difference. What's to keep you from living in that dead girl's place—and name?"

CHAPTER IV

"INTO TEMPTATION"

For a moment the question had no meaning for Barbara. She only stared uncomprehendingly at the old grandmother, who, with her fierce clutch still upon the girl's arms, the new gleam in her sunken eyes, repeated:

"What's to keep you, I say, from living in that dead girl's place?"

"In—in her place?" echoed Barbara, slowly.

"Ay, ay; is it deaf or daft ye are these last days, Weasel Graeme? You are not like your own sharp, wise self at all. Haven't ye been crying out against the poverty and bad luck and want and woe that has been on ye ever since your poor wraith of a mother gave ye life? The curse of the Black Graeme is on ye, I don't deny. Here's your chance to lift it—the chance to shake it off."

"I don't—don't understand," gasped Barbara. "Grandmother, you don't mean——"

"I do, I do. Don't stare at me that way as if I had struck you dumb, Weasel. Have you lost your wits outright? I ask ye again, what's to keep

you from taking that dead girl's place? You're her age, her size, you've got the same white, puling, peaked face—ay and you're sharp and wise and cunning enough when you choose to be, Weasel, and there would be none to tell, girl, none to know. Roger Randall, for all his wisdom and book-learning, would be none the wiser for the changing," and the old woman laughed again her harsh, mirthless laugh.

"Grandmother," said Barbara slowly, a strange look of fear creeping over her pale face, "grandmother, you must have gone—mad——"

"Mad," repeated the old woman, fiercely, "mad! it is you who are mad, you young fool, not to see the luck, the golden luck before you—the luck that poor corpse upstairs has just dropped from her dead hand at your very feet. And you haven't the sense left to pick it up——"

"Oh, Elinor, poor, poor Elinor!" murmured Barbara, as the pitiless words turned her thoughts to the stark, shrouded figure upstairs.

"It's poor, poor Barbara to my thinking," scoffed the old grandmother, mockingly. "Listen to me, Weasel. It's not often I open my lips as I'm opening them to ye now. I'm just back from Clivedon. Ye know, maybe, what I went for."

"To see—father," answered the girl in a low tone.

"Yes." The old voice changed as if some master touch had suddenly fallen upon its jarred and broken chords. "To see your father, to see my boy, my strong, bold, brave boy rotting in his prison cell. Fifteen long years has he been there now, and five more to stay in those dark, strong, stone walls—in that cursed, living grave! For one fierce wild blow struck when the hot blood of the Graemes was boiling within him and he was blind and mad with its fury, girl, blind and mad! And Lynn Graydon never died from it, as three doctors swore. It wasn't the blow that killed him, it was the rage and passion and hate in his own heart. But the jury wouldn't listen."

"Oh, grandmother, don't tell me, don't tell me," whispered the girl, shuddering. "Haven't I heard it all? Don't I know the black shadow that is on me?" she continued passionately. "That has been on me all my life, from the time I found out that other girls wouldn't play with Buck Graeme's daughter? That boys called this house Jailbird's Roost. That I must be alone, alone, always cold and alone, until Elinor came, and—" the passionate outcry died in a hoarse, choked sob.

"Came to change all for you," continued the old woman. "Came to leave ye good fortune and good luck. Listen again, Weasel. Your father's words to me ere I left him this morning were: Send the girl off, if ye can, mother. She is old enough to work her own way now, and the blight will be on her while she stays at the Road House. And here is the way open to ye, if ye'll only walk it, Weasel—walk it wisely and warily, as ye well know how. Ye've got the girl's story straight and clear, ye've got her trunk and her clothes and her papers. There's naught to fear if ye keep your heart and your wits. Take the dead girl's name and place—go to Roger Randall as the grandchild he is waiting for, and let him lift ye, as he can, girl—lift ye to a place as proud and high as any in the land.

"He will give ye name and home and friends, girl. Ye'll have fine living and fine clothes, and money to go where and how ye will. And who will be the worse for it? Not Roger Randall, for ye'll be as good a granddaughter as the other. Not the poor, cold corpse, that all his gold couldn't warm into life now. Who'll be the worse for it if ye take that dead girl's place?"

Barbara was listening now, listening with

dilated eyes fixed upon her grandmother's face; listening like a bird fascinated by the shining, sinuous thing on the grass below its nest.

Take Elinor's place! Take Elinor's place! The thought, so strange, so wild, so monstrous-seeming at first, was beginning to take shape in her bewildered mind. Vague, dim, uncertain shape, indeed, but outlined with the misty rainbows of which poor Elinor had built her broken dreams. The stately old home with its shading oak, its clambering roses; the wide hall rich in pictured memories; the safety, the shelter, the peace, the love that was waiting the dead girl's claim! Barbara saw it all in colors whose radiant shimmer and glow were only a dazzling mirage to her.

Take Elinor's place! Oh, poor grandmother was surely mad, and yet, yet——

"There's that meddling Daffy Mills at the door," said the old woman, snatching up the letter from Roger Randall and thrusting it into the folds of her dress. "Mind, not a word to him of this, girl, not a word, d'ye hear? Stay ye back, and I'll go see what it is he wants." And Barbara, whose strong, free spirit seemed broken-winged to-day, stood by the kitchen window that looked out over the weed-grown wastes that stretched back of

the old house down to the hollow under the great mountain yew, where for fifty years the Graemes had buried their dead; the grim "Black Graemes," who, in the fierce, untamed spirit they had brought from the Scotch Highlands, had once held this ridge in lawless strength.

Would poor Elinor be put there? Barbara wondered drearily; there in that dark hollow, where the sun never shone and no flower bloomed? And while she chilled at the thought she heard Daffy's brisk tones blending with the harsh voice of her grandmother at the front door.

"I don't want to intrude, of course, Mrs. Graeme, but I happened to hear that poor young critter I sent up here for board hez died on your hands, and I come to see if you didn't want some sort of neighborly help."

"No, we don't, thanks to you all the same, Daffy Mills."

"Ain't no kin or friends or anybody you'd like notified?" said Daffy.

"If there is they'll hev to come look her up themselves," was the sharp answer. "We've had trouble enough with her for the little she paid. And there's a trifle left that will go to pay for all she needs now—coffin and grave."

"Lord, that is sort of pitiful, isn't it?" said Daffy. "Such a young thing, too. I thought mebbe that letter I brought around this morning might be a sort of leader to you."

"It wasn't," answered the old woman quickly; "it wasn't nothing but a medicine mixture that she writ for, thinking it might make her well. I was a fool to take her in, half dead as she was. She's been a trouble and worry from first to last, and I'll take no trouble or worry more."

"Maybe if you put a notice in the papers," suggested Daffy.

"No, I won't, I won't put nothing nowhere," was the fierce answer. "If the girl has any friends they can look her up without my meddling. I'll have her buried decently in my own lot, and they'll find her there."

And Daffy, riding home after this neighborly effort, reflected that that was really all that could be expected of fierce old Granny Graeme.

"The poor little creetur was dead; poor as well as sick, any one could see. I might put a notice in the paper, but it's none of my business sure, and likely enough I'd stir up that old catamount's temper if I meddled. So I'll just let things take their way," concluded good-hearted Daffy. "After

all, it can't matter much to the poor young thing now. Only I'm sort of sorry that preacher has gone from Graystone. I must say I'd strike him for a prayer or a blessing on that lonely little grave, sure."

"You heard what I said to that meddling fool?" said the old woman, as she came shuffling back to the kitchen, where Barbara still stood looking out of the broken-paned window.

"Yes," answered the girl, slowly. "I heard you lie, grandmother."

"Ay," said the old woman, "and you'll hear me lie again if need be. What is lie or truth to that poor cold clay above, girl? And—and—it's luck, it's home, it's fortune—it's all the world can give to woman for you, if you'll do as I bid; if you'll go to Roger Randall in that dead girl's place——"

"I can not. You are mad to think of such a thing, grandmother, mad, mad!" cried the girl, with sudden passion flaming in her gray eyes, and she flung out of the dark-raftered room, and darted like a hunted thing into the open, as if for breath and light. And the old woman nodded and chuckled in triumph, for she knew the same "madness" had seized Barbara and was holding her, struggle against it as she might.

As indeed it was. Through the heavy, hopeless gloom shrouding her life-path, through the icy horror of death and despair that was on her to-day, there had burst a light—that, at first, only a pale mocking gleam, was growing, steadying, brightening into more alluring radiance every moment.

Oh, it was madness, madness, Barbara knew! And yet—and yet——

With a sudden strange terror of her grandmother, of herself, more than all of that white, still figure in the darkened room upstairs, Barbara sped away from the shadows, the memories of the grisly old house, into the forest ways, where the sunlight shimmered through the budding boughs, and the brown bare earth was stirring with tender shoots of weed and grass, and the warm, moist air was filled with the whispers of spring. Far away she sped, down the wild steep slopes of the ridge, where the burn, full fed from spring rains and melting snows, foamed and swirled as it took its way over the rocks. Only a few weeks ago it had been locked in ice, shrouded in snowdrifts, hushed in deathlike silence. Barbara paused perforce in her flight as she reached the fall. Here the ridge suddenly broke off in a sheer descent of some thirty feet, where the burn trickled

lazily in the long, hot summer days, or hung in glittering icicles during the sharp, short winter. Now arched with rainbows, glittering with jeweled spray, it took the leap in one strong, joyous bound, and singing its song of triumph swept down the valley.

With an odd answering thrill in her breast, Barbara sat down on a flat rock, and the vision from which she had fled rose before her.

The home—the stately, beautiful home of which Elinor had talked and dreamed until her patient listener knew its every detail. The climbing roses, the sheltering oaks, the wide hall, the life within, the full, rich, calm, untroubled life, in which no sorrow or shame or want could ever come—all that would have been Elinor's might be her own. The mad old grandmother had said it—might be her own—her own. And drawing a long, gasping breath, Barbara at last faced the dazzling, bewildering thought boldly. All this might be her own if she would dare take the dead girl's vacant place, press her vanished claim, go boldly to Rosecrofte and say, "I am Elinor Kent." From the depths of these mountain forests, where the friendless, lonely girl had laid down her life, what voice would come in protest over nigh a thousand miles of distance? Who of the few that had given scant

thought of scorn or pity to either girl would give thought of doubt or suspicion now?

Take Elinor's place, her grandmother had said, and again Barbara drew a long, shivering breath; while the rainbow spray of the leaping stream drenched her hair and face unnoticed, and her quick brain wakened. Thought, fancy, purpose, *will*, at last roused into life.

Slowly she took her way back to the house, the spring sunshine upon her bare head, the music of the burn in her ears and a new hunger in her heart—the fierce hunger of the starveling who sees food and drink in rich, full measure within daring, reckless reach.

But as she passed the hollow a sound chilled the warm leap of the blood in her veins. It was the dull thud of spaded earth under the old yew-tree where two men were digging a grave.

* * * * *

"An' she do look pooty, shuah," said old Huldah, who was a practised tirewoman to death. "Ole missus she don rummaged de trunk, and found a little white frock an' we's dressed her up fine. She is lying dar in de ole parlor looking like one of de sperrits before de throne."

"In—in the parlor!" said Barbara, for that

dark, grim room had been closed ever since she could remember.

"Ob course, chile; bleegeed to put a corpse in de bes' place you got; even ole missus, cantankerous as she is, 'greed to dat. Mouty dark and cobwebby, but dar ain't no one to take count ob dat. Come in and see."

Chilled with the horror of it all Barbara followed the old woman into the long-closed room, with the heavy, old-time furniture her mother had brought as dower to the house, standing in straight grim rows against the walls. A special glimmer came from the tall mirror between the closed windows—the mirror in which Barbara had feared to look for many a year, so blent was its ghostly presence with the horror and mystery of the darkened room.

But to-day the past vanished for her. She saw only Elinor, Elinor lying there, calm, white-robed, beautiful, every line of pain and trouble smoothed from the pure young face that wore a radiant smile of peace.

It was Barbara's first sight of death, and she stood in awed, breathless silence, with parted lips and dilated eyes, while old Huldah, garrulous with importance, prated on.

"She do look pooty, shuah. Pity she ain't got mother or father or some sort of kinfolks to come look at her. Sich a pore young critter to go down to the grave alone—nobody even to send her a posy of death flowers."

"Flowers!" Barbara caught at the word and lifted the gray eyes that burned to-day with a new, feverish light to old Huldah's face. "Ought she have flowers?"

"Ay, she ought," answered the old woman, "even cullud folks hez flowers, chile. When my Mary Jane died de laylocks was in bloom and dey just kivered her wif 'em. Took away de lonely look somehow. An' when I hired out down ter Atlanta, and young Miss Mabel died, it 'peared like folks couldn't send enough. De roses and lilies was piled round so you couldn't see de coffin or de corpse. But you can't get no flowers 'bout here now. Dar ain't even a crocus out yet."

"Oh, Huldah, yes, we must, we must. She—she loved flowers so," said Barbara, a dry, hoarse sob rising in her throat as she spoke.

"Ole Dutch Fritz hez got 'em," said Huldah; "but Lor', chile, he won't give a shoot to de libbing or dead. He's a nussing 'em to sell high."

"She must have them," said Barbara. "She

must have flowers. She used to talk about them, and—and dream about them, Huldah. I'll go get some right now."

Half an hour later Fritzie Wonn, whittling flower-sticks on his father's back porch, was startled by the appearance of Barbara, with Rip, croaking indignantly at his summary and unlooked for capture, in her arms.

"I've brought him," she said, and the sharp, quick tone was a little tremulous. "You said you'd give two dollars for him. And I'll take it all out in flowers."

"In flowers?" Fritzie, whose wits worked slowly, stared uncomprehendingly.

"Yes, stupid—in *flowers!*" answered Barbara. "I will sell you Rip for his price in flowers. And mind you, don't cheat me, either. You can't ever give me what he is worth," and again the sharp tone trembled, "but you've got to pay me fair and square, and then you can have him for your own." And though her voice quavered and every dull croak of her fierce old pet was a sharp hurt, Barbara drove her bargain close and hard. She went back to the Road House with her arms full of snowy, fragrant blooms.

And Elinor, pale, smiling Elinor, had the

flowers of which she had dreamed at last. Next day, when a few hard-handed men from the neighborhood laid the gentle sleeper to rest under the old yew-tree in the hollow, the new-made mound was left white with the flowers of spring.

All through the long, solemn hours that death held his chill reign in the Road House the fever spark had shone in Barbara's gray eye, and the old grandmother said nothing, for she knew the fire she had kindled was burning in the girl's blood and brain. But when they came back from the grave beneath the yew-tree, she called Barbara to straighten the grim old parlor into its usual dark, desolate order.

"I can not bide to look into it," she croaked, "for it is here the curse fell on us. They were playing cards and Lynn Graydon saw what your father held in yon glass. And then came the hot words and the mad blow. Eh, eh!" the old woman suddenly bent down and snatched a bit of worn rug from the floor, showing a dark, brownish stain beneath. "That is what is upon us, girl, what no soap or sand can ever stir. I scoured like a madwoman on it for nigh a year. It is blood, blood! The blood that poured from Lynn Graydon's mouth when he fell. If your father had

run when I cried to him, if he had run! But no! He stood there, staring like he was struck to stone. Eh, eh, eh!" and the old woman dropped into a chair and flinging her apron over her head began to rock back and forward, crying the fierce, tearless cry of a wild thing robbed of its young.

"It killed your mother," continued the old, broken voice. "Poor, white-faced wraith that she was, she died within the year. And as she was dying she prayed—for she was a praying woman—that you might follow her soon. And I would have prayed the same if I had known how. But you lived, girl, you lived, to bear the shame and the blight and the curse; you lived to grow into a poor lone starveling, with no one to give ye kind word or helping hand to earn your bit of bread. You lived, to stand alone with no chance for luck or joy, or love!"

"Oh, grandmother, hush, hush!" Barbara fell on her knees before the old woman, and caught the rocking, wailing figure in her arms. "Grandmother, yes; I have the chance," the girl panted, excitedly. "The one desperate chance you showed me. And—I will take it, grandmother, for I will go mad if I stay here now. I will go to Rosecroft in Elinor's place!"

CHAPTER V

BROKEN BONDS

THE old woman laid her knotty hands on Barbara's shoulder. It was the first approach, in all their eighteen years together, to a womanly caress.

"An' ye will do well, girl, ye will do well. What is before ye, Weasel, but work at the wheel or loom, where every beggar beside ye could flout and jeer at your father's child? What is before ye but hard work and hard living, or maybe harder mat-ing with one that would not scorn to wive with Barbara Graeme? And now—now! In Roger Randall's home ye'll have your pick of the proudest in the land."

"You have seen him—you knew him, grandmother?" asked Barbara, eagerly. "When? How? Oh, tell me all about it—all, all!"

"No," answered the other, and she spoke now with the usual harsh tone and look. "I'll tell ye nothing, girl, save that once Roger Randall stood between me and my spring sunshine. It was little to him, and he has forgotten it all this many a year, but for *me*, girl, *for me*, it was the one glint

in fifty years of darkness, and I never forgot, I never forgot. But this is naught to ye, girl—naught to ye, only— Remember what I tell ye—the Randall pride is high and hard as a mountain rock. It will not break or soften, strike it as ye may.

“And now listen to me, Weasel, for there is no time to lose. Ye must be off, or they may send here looking for the girl, and that will end all for us. You must be off to-morrow morning, at break of day. Ye’ll take her trunk and clothes and papers—they are all there to prove your claim. The wedding-lines, and the baptism certificate of Elinor Randall Kent, and the letters—all as she told you. The money is nigh gone for the doctor and the coffin and the grave, but I’ve a bit of my own that I was saving for my burying—fifty dollars—that will pay your way. And ye will wear her clothes, and put money and letter safe in your breast, for you must not let Roger Randall’s letter out of your hold night or day, the letter bidding you come to his home as his daughter’s child. Hold to that letter, girl, as to your life.”

“Oh, grandmother, grandmother!” again the wave of fear, of doubt, swept over the girl’s young heart as the rainbow castle of her dream took

stern, strong outline at the old woman's words. "It is all so mad, so desperate, so daring——"

"Eh, and why shouldn't ye dare? Why shouldn't ye dare?" was the fierce rejoinder. "What have ye here to lose, girl? And it's all the world can give ye that ye gain."

"I know, I know," answered Barbara, drawing a long, quivering breath. "And—and Elinor—she would have given it to me if she could. She would have left me her place. Her dead lips seemed to tell me to go, grandmother; to go and be happy. And I will—I will dare it all, to live her life, the beautiful life she has left to me. I will be all—all that she would have been, grandmother."

"Eh, if ye can, girl," answered the old woman dryly, and the words came back grimly prophetic in the after time. "If ye can. But there'll be none to tell the differ. Ye can be your own wise, sharp self, and all will be right and well. Only remember when ye cross Roger Randall's doorstone that the past is dead to ye—dead as the girl that lies under the old yew."

"Dead as the girl that lies under the yew." The old speaker's harsh, cracked tone seemed to sound the knell of Barbara Graeme's young life. Long

afterward the scene came back to her, the shadowy room with its grisly memories, the heavy furniture, dimly outlined against the moldering wall, the ghostly glimmer of the tall mirror, the old woman seated there in the gathering darkness, battling with grim, savage strength against the doom of her race, grappling with Fate for the last of her blood and name, reckless of the cost of victory, blind to the thorny path of falsehood into which she was forcing the young, faltering feet.

"Dead as the girl that lies under the yew-tree!" Fatal words, that were to echo pitilessly down the coming years, for Barbara Graeme's young life in all its bold, fearless freedom, its untaught truth ended to-night; ended in this dark room, where the fragrance of the spring flowers she had placed on Elinor's dead breast still lingered, like a faint, sweet pleading whisper that had no power to warn or save. Then closing and locking the parlor doors, the old grandmother went back to her kitchen, while Barabara took her seat on the porch, where the white star looked down through the pines, and the breeze that came from the hollow bore the chilling odor of upturned earth.

There was no Rip to flutter to her knee and

with hoarse caw break the stillness. Yet there was a restful tenderness in the silence to-night, and the dark shadow of the pines seemed a shelter like that of encircling arms, that held her as her dead mother had so often held her in her childish dreams.

Gloomy and desolate as it was, the Road House had been home to Barbara for eighteen years, and winged for daring flight as she was, the old nest seemed strangely safe and warm to-night. To-morrow she would hate it again, she knew, but to-night a thousand memories of early childhood were stirring in her heart. For there had been a brief, bright time—that comes to every healthy human life before mind and heart are conscious of shadow or stint—a time when the gloomy vistas of the pines had stretched golden arcades to Barbara's dancing feet, when the ruined barn was a fairy palace filled with treasure-trove, when perched on the topmost branches of the old yew-tree she sang to the listening birds.

A brief, bright time from which she had soon awakened, to think and feel and harden in self-protection, even as the laughing "burn" hardened at the touch of the frost. But the rippling music, hushed so long ago, was echoing in her heart to-

night, and there was a softened look on the young face that gave it a new charm to the honest lover that came swinging up the weed-grown road and paused in some doubt as to his welcome at the gate.

Barbara started up with a little cry of surprise, for Rip fluttered from Daffy's hold, and with a satisfied croak settled on his old perch on the rotten post.

"I've brought him back," said Daffy. "Fritzie Wonn came within an ace of as big a thrashing as he ever got in his life when I saw him with that crow, Weasel. But his old dad swore that he had bought him fair and square."

"He did, he did," said Barbara, eagerly. "I wanted some flowers."

"So they told me," said Daffy. "If you had let me take a hand, as I wanted to, you would have had the flowers—but it's all right. I've brought the bird back. He is yours again, Weasel. Fritzie did not want to give him up but I made it a sort of paying proposition, and so he sold out at an advance."

"You mean you *bought* him back for me, Daffy?"

"Well, ruther," said Daffy, with the smile that

showed his white teeth. "You don't suppose I stole him back, do ye, Weasel?"

"Bought Rip back? Oh, that was good of you, Daffy," said Barbara, as she took the fluttering Rip into her arms. "I've missed him so much."

"I sort of thought you would," said Daffy. "Not that I can see any pertikler company in a crow. If you'd like a dog now, Weasel, a real first-class dog, I've got a collie that's worth talking about and caring for. I turned down a bid of twenty dollars for him yesterday, but if you'd like him he is yours to-morrow to have for keeps."

"Oh, thank you, Daffy, no, no! I don't want a dog," and there was a little quiver in Barbara's voice at the thought of all the change in her wants the morrow would bring. "But I do thank you for Rip, Daffy. I was afraid they might hurt him to make him talk, and there is no use in a bird talking."

"Not a bit," said Daffy, decidedly. "There is a durned sight too much talking done now, without setting crows at it. Sort of lonesome here to-night, ain't it? It always is after a funeral. Do you mind having me keep ye company a bit?"

"No, indeed," said Barbara, the softness of her

mood deepened by Rip's return. "Sit down and keep me company, Daffy."

And Daffy sat down on the porch beside Barbara, quite dazed by the sudden rainbow that seemed spanning Love's rather stormy way. He was "striking" it right at last! And perhaps he would have struck it right indeed—perhaps Barbara, with the half-forgotten sweetness of childish memories wakened in her heart, with Rip close in her arms, and Elinor's guiding star trembling through the darkness, perhaps this Barbara might have been moved to-night by the simple truth and earnestness of Daffy's honest love, and her story would never have been told.

But Daffy had tried the simple truth when he blurted out his love-tale over the soap boxes less than a week ago. He felt this was an occasion that demanded higher art, and he proceeded to rise to it accordingly.

"It's a beautiful night, isn't it, Weasel? So sort of dreamy and—and—starry?"

"Yes," answered Barbara, briefly.

"There is something—something great in stars," continued Daffy, conscious that he was somewhere near the proper level. "They are so high and so bright, and they sort of fill your deepest soul with

—joy and wonder. If we could just sit here always—side by side like this, looking at them stars, Weasel—and listening—listening——”

“To the tree-toads,” assisted Barbara, mockingly; but Daffy was not to be turned from his triumphant course.

“Yes, to the tree-toads, and the breeze—the breeze that sighs so softly as it lifts the golden tresses from your brow, Weasel.”

“But I haven’t golden tresses—they are red,” said Barbara, curtly.

“They are golden to me,” sighed Daffy, “gold as the golddest sunshine, and your eyes are brighter than any diamonds ever taken from the deepest caverns of the earth, and your cheeks—they lily-white cheeks—there ain’t no rose in the world that can come anywhere near them. You are sun and flower and star to me altogether, and here in the solemn, silent watches of the night I swear that I love you as woman was never loved before. If you’ll be mine, Weasel, life will be an everlasting and eternal dream of bliss. If you’ll be mine, my heart will beat true to you forever—

“Till the sun grows cold,

And the stars are old—

And the leaves of the Judgment Book unfold.”

concluded Daffy, lapsing into the one school-

boy poem whose swing had lingered in his busy mind.

There was no answer. Barbara sat motionless, her wan little face supported by her hand, her eyes fixed on the white star gleaming through the gap in the pines. The sadness of the uplifted face, the silence of the sharp tongue, poor Daffy misconstrued. He had "struck it" with Weasel at last!

He slipped his arm about her waist, and was just bending for an honest lover's kiss when he was dazed by a swift blow on the cheek and Barbara sprang to her feet, Rip fluttering away from her arms with a croak of alarm.

"There—take him! Take him back, Daffy Mills! I don't want you or anything you can bring me! You did talk like—like you had some sense the other day, but to-night—to-night—" the young voice trembled with some vague pain, some yearning for strong help and guidance which she could not put into words, "I find you're a bigger fool than I thought. You can go home and take Rip with you. And I don't want ever to see your face again."

"Lord!" muttered the bewildered Daffy, as the girl vanished into the gloomy old hall behind her and slammed the door. "Now who would ever

think she'd a-taken it like that? Weasel?" he called eagerly, "Weasel! Come back, won't you, Weasel?"

But Rip's indignant croak was the only answer, and wondering at the curious ways of womankind, Daffy took his darkened way home.

But "Mr. Dafton Mills" had not been cutting his own way through a rough world for six-and-twenty years without learning some valuable lessons in courage and perseverance. He had had worse knocks than that light blow from his lady's hand, and never gone down yet. In the clear sunlight of the following day, and in the prosaic atmosphere diffused by general merchandise, Daffy realized that the heights of poetry were slippery traveling for untrained feet.

"I guess I did talk like a durn fool last night. Some girls might have swallowed all that stuff about moon and stars, but Weasel ain't that sort. It just made her dead sick, and if I hadn't been a born ijot I might hev seen. Poor little girl! she did look so lonesome and sad a-setting there in the shadow of that cussed old house a-hugging that durned black crow, that I wuz ready to make myself nine different kinds of a fool to please her. And I'll try it agin," resolved Daffy stoutly. "I'll

take another tack and try it agin. She can't do no more this time than draw a gun."

And the picture of that pale, desolate young face upturned to the gap in the pines lingered so distractingly with Daffy all next day that his keen business wits quite forsook him. He measured vinegar for molasses, forgot the advance in butter, took in plugged coins, and was, as he himself confessed, generally dumbheaded.

Starlight found him back at the Road House, prepared to follow any track that his perplexing ladylove might take.

"No more book talk or poetry," resolved Daffy. "I'll jest hold my tongue until I see how she leads, and I'll follow suit and make no fool plays to-night, you kin bet on it. Hallo—you're there, are you, old chap?" as Rip croaked a friendly greeting from the gate-post. "Somehow, I never could get over the feeling that there was bad luck in a croaking crow, and he certainly did me up last night. And there ain't nobody waiting to meet me by moonlight to-night, it's very plain," added Daffy, with a forced laugh, as he strode up to the deserted porch and knocked at the door.

There was a slow, shuffling step within, a rusty bolt creaked, and the old grandmother looked out

at the visitor. "Oh, it's you?" she said, sourly. "Ef you've come looking after Weasel she ain't here."

"Not here?" echoed Daffy, prepared for a rebuff. "I'm sorry to hear it. Hope you are well, Mrs. Graeme. Pretty night, isn't it? I'll step round again some other time and hope to find her home."

"Well, you won't," was the grim answer. "She's gone—to stay ez long ez her mother's folks will keep her. They writ for her—and sent her the money to come to them. And her father—you know where he is, I suppose—give orders last Tuesday she wuz to go where she could hold her head up with anybody—which is more than she can ever do here. So she is gone."

"Where, when?" gasped Daffy, feeling in his heart there was both truth and wisdom in this gruff statement.

"Ef it will do you any good to know, she took the 6.40 train for Baltimore this morning. But where she's going from there, I won't say. Her folks don't want no trailing or gabbling from here. So ye can give it out, if ye please, that Weasel Graeme hes cut loose from this here ridge forever."

And the grim old chatelaine of the Road House

shut the door sharply, and put an end to further discourse.

"Well, I swan!" muttered the bewildered Daffy. "That's a lick I wasn't looking for, sure. Though it's a move in the right line for Weasel, certain. Gone to her mother's folks, eh? Well, wherever they are, those same 'mother's folks' are going to find that there's one 'trailer' in Graystone Ridge they can't keep off Weasel's track without a shotgun." And Daffy, finding Love's flowery pathway temporarily blocked, went back to work over his stone-grinding machine until midnight.

But in spite of cogs and levers a pale, sad young face flitted through his dreams, and Weasel's sudden flight was the first thought in his mind next morning as he opened the store for the early mail and daily papers which were flung in his door at 7 A.M. promptly, thereby enabling Mr. Mills to enjoy his hot coffee, made skillfully by his own hand, and the latest news still damp from the press before the morning rush of business.

He had just settled himself comfortably for his luxurious half-hour, when startling head lines confronted him.

ANOTHER RAILROAD HORROR

SHOCKING DISASTER ON THE B. & P.

Eastern Express plunges into Bixby's Creek. Two hundred dead and four hundred injured, many fatally.

Daffy read on for a moment with only the usual shock at such an appalling loss of life, then suddenly an icy fear struck through his heart. He sprang for the time-table upon his desk—"6.40," the old woman had said. Weasel had left yesterday morning at 6.40. The figures in the time-table danced before his eyes as he scanned them and computed with quick, practiced skill. Great heavens, it was her train then—there was no other that stopped within two hours at Graystone Station. Her train and—and——

He staggered back against the counter sick with fear and horror as he read the terrible details.

Six passenger cars plunged into the swollen stream. Scores swept to death as they strove to escape in the raging waters. Piers of the bridge loosened by spring flood. Wrecking trains sent hurriedly forward. All houses in the neighborhood converted temporarily into hospitals. As the accident occurred just at nightfall it is impossi-

ble to give further details, or more than approximate the number of dead and injured.

"Jake," called Daffy sharply to the assistant, who was already busy arranging a tempting display of collar buttons and scarf pins in a glittering showcase. "You'll have to leave all that durn tomfoolery and attend to business to-day. I'm off."

"Off where?" exclaimed Jake, turning staring eyes on his employer at this unprecedented announcement.

"To Bixby's Creek, wherever that may be," answered Daffy, as he made a hurried toilet behind the counter. "There's been another—" the speaker broke into strong language— "smash up on the B. & P., and that poor little Weasel Graeme was aboard. Grandmother told me she sent her to her mother's folks yesterday morning. Five hundred miles away in a mix-up like that, with no one to look out for her— I'm off to see after her, dead or alive!"

CHAPTER VI

ROSECROFTE

THERE were few pleasanter scenes touched by the early sunbeams of this April day than the cheery breakfast room of Rosecroft Manor. The wide, deep windows, with their rich draperies, showed the rose vines clambering around sill and cornice in tender leaf, and framed as fair a vista of shaded lawn and shining river as could be found on the Maryland shore.

Within, the dark, paneled walls, rich with trophies of sport and chase, the glitter of silver and glass on quaint old carved buffets, the rare and delicate china carefully guarded in the diamond-paned cupboards, the great silver punch-bowl that had brimmed with "wassail" before the luckless Stuarts lost England's crown—all told of wealth and taste, mellowed by the golden glories of a stately past.

That past seemed epitomized in the proud bearing of the tall, white-haired master of the house, who was seated at the head of his breakfast-table. Though close to three score and ten, Judge Ran-

dall still held his own in hunt and field with men twenty years his junior, and the dark eyes beneath their snowy brows could flash at will with all the fire of his youth. There was no weakening in the strong, stern outlines of jaw and chin—only, about the chiseled lips that had been one of the beauties of his early manhood, were tracings penciled by grief—pain—remorse? Who could tell?

His daughter-in-law sat opposite him, presiding in the place of the wife who had died thirty years before. His son Gilbert, a pleasant ruddy-faced man of five and forty, was at his right, while aureoled by the morning sunbeams that played around her was Mildred, the granddaughter of the house, a beautiful, dark-eyed girl in her early twenties. Life had given of its best to Mildred Randall. Her father was a lawyer of fine standing in Baltimore, her mother had been a belle in that city of fair women and was an heiress in her own right. They had their own home, where Mildred had made a brilliant début several years before, and had reigned in gracious sovereignty ever since, save during the pleasant months that were given either to foreign travel or Rosecrofte, that had always been a second home. But Nature's darling, fortune's favorite that she was, years of simple con-

vent training had made Mildred Randall a sweet, strong, light-hearted girl, all unspoiled.

"Strange!" said the Judge, as, his breakfast over, he glanced at the letters Scip, the old family butler, always laid beside his plate. "Strange that we have heard nothing yet. It has been three weeks since I wrote . . . it was a mistake to write at all. I should have gone for the child—for Nellie's child—gone myself to bring her home. I thought it might seem easier for her to come to us at her own time, in her own way, kinder not to break in on her old ties, her old life, too suddenly. She had money for the journey, her father wrote. I can't understand her silence. My letter would have been returned if she had not received it."

"Couldn't you telegraph to the post-office for information?" suggested Mr. Gilbert Randall.

"I did, sir, I did. They told me that all mail for that address had been forwarded to Leepport, Tennessee, according to order. Leepport is a little factory town where—where possibly the poor child went to find employment. Employment! Good God, my daughter's child! If I don't hear within twenty-four hours, I go to find her, and find her I will if she is on the face of the earth."

And the Judge, who had risen as he spoke,

turned abruptly from the table and left the room.

"The old gentleman is pretty well stirred up," said Gilbert Randall. "No one has heard him mention poor Elinor's name since her death until this last month."

"Which was a downright shame, as I've always thought--and said when Grandy was not around to hear," said Mildred. "Poor dear Aunt Nellie! I can just remember her as one remembers a baby dream. A lovely little golden-haired thing that used to pet me and play with me and cry over me I couldn't tell why. I suppose after that music teacher had begun to strike the tender chords of her soft little heart."

"Soft little heart indeed!" sighed Mrs. Randall, who had the placid calm of the woman who has never known storm or stress or strain. "And you might add a soft little head as well! If she had only waited until she was fairly out—but to run off before she was seventeen.

"I've been blamed for it, I know," continued the good lady plaintively, "but I was little more than a girl myself, I am sure, and with Nellie Randall's prospects, I never dreamed she would think of her *music teacher*! Rather a good-looking young man,

I must confess, but most uninteresting. No money, no family, no position—and your grandfather was so proud of his only girl! Of course, it would all have been forgiven if she had lived—but she died within the year, and then there were only the two men—husband and father—to reckon with each other, and both were proud and sore and bitter. Kent refused to give up the child entirely, as the Judge demanded, and the Judge said some hard things that Kent could not forget or forgive, and so the break came that was never healed.”

“Oh, well, let bygones be bygones, my dear,” said her husband, easily. “We will do all we can to make it up to poor Nellie’s girl. We won’t mind if she cuts us out root and branch, will we, Milly?” turning to his daughter.

“Not a bit,” was the frank answer. “With you and mama behind me, I have more than my share of the good things of life, and I want to see this poor little thing come in for all that is hers, all that has been denied her ever since she was born. But I’m dying with curiosity to see her, Dad. I am wondering, with a deep, dark wonder, what she is like.

“A Randall that isn’t a Randall; that has never known Randall ties or traditions, a Randall that, instead of being landlocked in safe harbor, has been

buffeted about by storm and wind—a poor, pitiful little——”

“My dear Mildred,” interposed her mother, quickly, “I hope you will remember your grandfather’s plainly expressed wish—there is to be no reference whatever to the unhappy past. All associations with it are to be broken imperatively and forever. It is the only way in which your cousin can take her proper place in her family, in society, in the world where the daughter of Elinor Randall rightly belongs. You will remember this I hope, my dear?”

“I will, mama, of course. I’ll let the dead past bury its dead. Only . . . there’s no edict against watching the transmigration—and, good gracious, there’s a telegraph boy now coming up the path!” and the bright-eyed speaker sprang to the window.

“Had we not better stop him, Dad? He may have bad news—and Grandy is too old for a sudden shock.”

Without waiting for her father’s slower movements Mildred darted out on the porch. But she was too late. Her grandfather, standing on the wide sweep of the stately colonnade, had already seen the messenger and caught the despatch nervously from the boy’s hand.

"My God!" burst from his trembling lips, as he glanced over the bit of yellow paper.

"Grandy! Father! Oh, Judge, what is it?" cried the various members of the family, hurriedly gathering around the old man, who stood white and shaken amidst them.

"There has been an accident," he said at last, slowly, "and the child—Elinor's child—read, Gilbert," and he held out the telegram. And the son read aloud to the startled listeners:

"BIXBY JUNCTION, April 2d. Hon. Roger Randall, Rosecrofte, Co. —, Md.

"Young woman supposed to be fatally injured in wreck last evening has letter on her person addressed to Elinor Randall Kent, signed by grandfather Roger B. Randall, Rosecrofte, Md. Identify, if possible, before death, as patient is unconscious.

"J. L. VANCE, M.D.,
Attending Physician."

There was a moment of awestruck silence, then Gilbert Randall spoke.

"Leave it all to me, father. I will take the next train and see to everything."

"No, no!" said the Judge, rousing. "I must go—go myself. It is the last, the least, I can do now for—for—Elinor's child. Great heavens,

what an end, what an end to the cruel, tragic story of her pitiful young life! I must go at once."

"Father, no, no," said the younger man. "It will be too much for you. Let me go in your place."

"I tell you, no!" was the sharp, irritated answer. "You can come with me, if you wish."

"Take me, Grandy," said Mildred, eagerly. "It may be a terrible place, where there are no women to nurse or help."

"Ay, it is, it is. I know the place," answered the Judge. "A rocky gorge in the mountains; a wild, lonely place. You come with us, Milly, too, only be quick, girl, be quick. We must take the next train. Tell Matt to get out the roans. We will catch the express at Bellton if we are quick."

And with the master's imperative command thrilling the startled household, all were ready for departure in half an hour. There was not a moment to lose, as the hurried travelers realized, for it was fully a day's journey to the scene of the accident, and the morning paper which followed the telegram was bristling with horrible headlines, giving details of the disaster that chilled the reader's blood.

Fuller and grislier details met them as they

journeyed on, and it was pitiful to see how, despite his stern mastery of himself, the lines deepened about Judge Randall's compressed lips, and over his usually fresh-colored face there crept the ashen line of age. Gilbert watched his father with anxious eyes, while to Mildred, hitherto "landlocked," as she had merrily described herself, from all rough winds and waves of life—this was her first touch of the storm, her first breath of those wide open wastes where the tempests rage, and grief and pain and Death stalk unveiled.

It was sunset when they reached Bixby's Station. The usually quiet little mountain hamlet was astir with ghastly life. Wagons lined the one street, a large hospital tent was stretched on a bit of level ground, the little meeting-house was a morgue, where rows of stiff, stark figures awaited identification. Men stood around the humble doorways, talking in low tones, and now and then a sharp cry, piercing the quiet, would tell of some sudden agony of recognition, or agony of despair, while the ragged, yawning gap of the broken bridge, the torn rail swinging over the chasm, the huge heap of wreckage below, where engine and cars lay piled in an inert, impotent mass, like some fierce monster crushed in a death leap—

gave *motif* to the scene. Through all the horror came the laughing voice of the waters, that, full-fed from a thousand mountain sources, swept in a joyous flood over ruin, wreckage, death, singing as they went.

But only dimly, as one catches the shadowy background of a picture, did our travelers note any details of this sunset scene. Stepping forward to a group of men gathered in front of the little station, Judge Randall asked for Dr. Vance, and in a few moments that gentleman, grave, clear eyed, and scarcely thirty, presented himself in a busy surgeon's *deshabille*.

"Judge Randall?" he said. "I am very glad you have come. I telegraphed you on a venture, as I have been obliged to do in most cases."

"Is—is she alive still?" asked the Judge with an effort.

"Yes—or she was when I saw her an hour ago," answered the doctor. "And there have been gleams of consciousness, the nurse tells me. But you can see and judge for yourself. We have done the best we could for the women," he continued, as he led the way to a little cottage that stood somewhat back from the steep village street, "but even the best here is rude enough."

He pushed open the cottage door as he spoke, and showed a low, white-washed room, where a narrow cot stood near the one wide-open window. As they entered the Red Cross nurse, was just drawing a sheet pitifully over the still, stark occupant.

"Dead?" asked the doctor, briefly.

"Dead!" echoed the Judge, in a hoarse whisper.

"Then—then we are too late?"

"No, no," the doctor laid a kind hand on the old man's arm. "This is another, an older woman. Miss Flynn," and the speaker turned to the nurse, "these are relatives looking for the young woman—ticket number 204, I think."

"Yes," was the business-like answer. "In the next room, please."

And chilled with the horrors around them the travelers crossed the farther threshold, and stood in a narrow slant-roofed room, little more than a shed, where the last faint glow of the sunset fell upon another narrow cot.

A girl lay upon it—a girl with the pallor of death on her thin young face; her long, fringed eyelids closed, the bandage around her temples pressing back an aureole of red-gold hair. A girl so unlike the vision cherished in Judge Randall's

heart of hearts that for a moment he stood shocked, almost repelled.

Then suddenly the gray eyes opened in a piteous look of terror.

"I dare not," she murmured, with a shudder.
"I dare not go——"

"Where, my poor child, where?" asked the Judge, soothingly.

"To him, to Rosecrofte, to *her* people," was the panting, frightened answer. "Her proud, rich people! I must turn back—I dare not go face them. I dare not go!"

"Oh, my poor child, my poor Elinor's neglected child!" Judge Randall's voice shook with a sudden storm of emotion rare to him—pity, tenderness, sorrow, above all, remorse swept over his proud soul in a passionate flood. This was his work, his work—the frail, wasted form, the wan, worn young face, the toil-roughened hands, the broken spirit shrinking in fear from her own—to this his harsh, stern pride had brought his daughter's child. And his proud nature stirred to its deepest depths, Roger Randall's heart went out to the pale stranger.

She must not die! She should not! He would wrest the poor, pale, blighted flower from the

grasp of death and nurse it back into life and bloom.

"Save her, doctor," he whispered, hoarsely. "It is my dead daughter's child, indeed. I had sent for her. She was coming to me—when—when this happened. Save her at any cost."

* * * * *

"Oh, Dad, it is just too pitiful," murmured Mildred, as, an hour later, she joined her father, who was smoking out by the cottage gate. Mildred's bright eyes were dim, her gay young voice low and tremulous, her dainty French handkerchief had been reduced almost to nothingness by surreptitious tears.

"She is gone, eh?" said Mr. Randall, who had found the day's experience quite beyond the reach of his usual good-humored philosophy.

"Oh, no no!" answered Mildred quickly. "I don't think she is going, either, Dad. The doctor says there is a change for the better to-night. She is partly conscious, though too weak to show it. And, oh, such a poor, pitiful little creature as she is! She looks as if she never had enough to eat or wear. And her trunk, Dad! It seems the baggage car was not hurt much, and they got hold of her trunk by the check she had in her pocket. They

are trying to identify people by their checks and trunks. I opened hers to see if I could get the nurse some clothes, and oh such poor little clothes! When I think of my Paris gowns and all I spent on them——” and the little French handkerchief was called into requisition again. “And there was a little tin box,” continued Mildred brokenly, “with papers. Aunt Nellie’s wedding-certificate and that of the child’s baptism and letters. I showed them to Grandy, and—and they nearly did him up. He came mighty close to sobbing outright.”

“I don’t wonder,” answered Mr. Randall, puffing away, grimly. “It’s the devil of a business altogether.”

“Oh, don’t, Dad, don’t say bad words to-night, when we’re all just hanging on the verge of things, and ought to be praying for that poor little creature’s life and soul. I wonder if she is a Catholic? There’s not a sign of it about her, though there is a little worn prayer-book of poor Aunt Nellie’s in the trunk. Dad, it isn’t right to take vows, but if that girl lives I’m going to make things up to her, if . . . if I have to cut over all my own gowns.”

“I wouldn’t worry about that,” said her father.

"She will have everything she wants if she pulls through this. And as for you, pet, with your mother and me backing you, as you said, you can afford to step out and give this little newcomer all the chance she wants. Well, sir," the speaker threw away his cigar, and turned to meet his father, who came hurriedly from the house. "How are things going on?"

"Better," was the cheerful answer. "Very much better, my boy. The doctor feared concussion, he said, but that fear has passed. She is rallying finely to-night, but we must get her away from here at once. I am going to telegraph for a special car. The doctor says he will be relieved from duty to-morrow morning, and I have engaged his services for the journey. We will take on a private nurse at N——. None of these here can be spared. We will get her home by to-morrow night—and then—then, my boy, nurse her back to life and to bloom, life and bloom that will make her forget—forget and forgive the past."

"I will go with you," said his son. "The woman here tells me she can give Milly accommodations for the night, but you and I will have to look out for ourselves as best we can. I'd like to find comfortable quarters for you, father."

"Don't think about it," was the hurried answer. "Comfort doesn't count to-night, my boy—nothing counts but the life, the safety of that poor child—Elinor's child. You saw her, Gilbert? Such a pale, frail little starveling, and *afraid* to come to us, lest we cast her out! Good God, how that pitiful moan hurt, Gilbert, how it hurt, coming from the lips of Elinor's child."

"Oh, well, don't take it too much to heart, sir," was the cheering answer. "Naturally the poor little girl would feel shy and strange, and I suppose she was thinking of her meeting with us all when she got hurt. We will make it up to her, as you say, make up to her for all that has been lacking in the past."

"Ay, we will," said the Judge in a deep, trembling tone. "Did you see her, Gilbert? Half-grown, half-fed, the worn hands, the sharp young face! And I—I put the blight on her. I denied her light, and life, and bloom! I thrust her from me into dearth and darkness, my own flesh and blood, my Elinor's child. Picture your Milly looking like that."

"I—I really can't," answered his son, frankly.

"No, you can't. To one we have given bloom,

to the other blight, Gilbert. But we will make it up to her—" and with a solemn oath the speaker asseverated his words. "If it is in the power of man, and that poor child is spared to me, I will make up to her all she has lost."

CHAPTER VII

'TWIXT LIFE AND DEATH

MILDRED stood at the gate where her father had left her, looking out through the deepening shadows at a scene that was her first glimpse of the tragedy of life. Lights were beginning to twinkle down the steep, crooked streets, and in the wooded depths of the gorge where searching parties were still at work. One-half the cars had gone down under the swollen waters of the creek, and it was supposed that many of the hapless victims had been swept off by the swift current to the great river into which the smaller stream debouched scarcely a mile below.

Each train now bore anxious friends and relatives to the scene of disaster, and the little mountain village, roused from its usual torpor, was all athrob with feverish life.

Two women passed by the gate, sobbing bitterly; men were bearing a stretcher from the little cottage across the street; from the banks of the stream came the clear, quick tones of official command. Everywhere was the shock, the jar, the hor-

ror of sudden and unlooked-for calamity. To Mildred Randall it was a revelation of a world she had never known, and she looked out upon it with soft, pitying eyes, longing to help, to ease, in some way, the cruel stress and strain around her. Suddenly, a voice out of the shadow accosted her.

"I beg your pardon, miss," the speaker stepped from the clump of cedars before the gate. "They told me there was a young girl lying dead in here. Can I look at her?"

The words came hoarse and quick, and with an evident self-repression, that touched Mildred's heart, though it was a plain, awkward countryman who spoke—a very clown to the cultured circles in which Miss Randall lived and moved.

"There is a woman dead in here, yes," she answered, in a low voice of sympathy.

"Went off—about sundown—so I heerd," the other continued, in the same short, broken tone. "Lord, if I hed only known it! I've been searching everywhere, up and down the stream—and among—among them stiffs yonder—and—and all the time she was dying here alone—God!"

There was no irreverence in the word—Mildred felt it was the cry of a breaking heart.

"Oh, it is hard, very hard," she said, softly. "Your sister, perhaps, or—or wife——"

"No, ma'am; no, she wasn't, so to say, nothing like kin, I mean, nor wife—no, nor sweetheart—least not of her own will. But—but I thought a lot of her. We were sort of neighbors, you see, and she, having nobody but an old grandmother to look after her, I come on as soon as I heerd of this smash-up to see if she was hurt. She don't seem to have been ticketed anywhere, though most of the people hed letters or cards or something to show up who they was. Can't even locate her trunk, though the baggage car is open fur inspection down thar below. But I heerd thar was a young woman lying dead up here, and so I come up—to—see——"

"You can come in, I am sure," said Mildred, impulsively. "Only I must ask you, please, to be very quiet and self-controlled. My—my cousin, who was severely injured, is in the adjoining room, and is just beginning to rally from the shock. She must be kept very quiet."

"Oh, I'll be quiet, miss, I'll be quiet. I ain't—ain't—the rampaging kind. Ef you just let me look at her so—so—I kin take her back home. It ain't any great shakes of a home, but she'd like to.

be tuk back, and laid under the old yew-tree thar, I know."

"Come, then," said Mildred softly, and she led the way back into the little cottage, where the light in the front room burned dimly, and the window-shutters were closed, and pitying hands had straightened the still, stark figure for the last sleep. The door leading into the back room was slightly ajar, and Mildred closed it cautiously before she lifted the veiling sheet from the dead face.

There was a moment's silence, then a strange, hoarse, choked sob.

"Is it——?" asked Mildred, her eyes full of tender sympathy.

"No, miss, no. Lord, that ere is old enough to be Weasel's mother," was the excited answer. "They told me, them ijiots down yonder, that it was a girl. It's a girl I'm looking for—a girl named Weasel—I should say Barbara Graeme."

In his relief and excitement the speaker had raised his voice, the deep rustic tone penetrated the rude partition, and the half-conscious patient within opened her wide, startled eyes.

"Daffy," she said sharply—"is it Daffy?"

"No, no, my dear," said the nurse soothingly, as she hurriedly stepped to the bedside to put more

ice on her patient's brow and give the drops ordered in case of returning delirium. Then cautiously opening the door she assumed professional authority.

"I must beg you to talk outside. My patient is so easily startled, and the doctor's orders were so positive that she must be kept quiet at any cost——"

"I'm going, ma'am," said the visitor, in a whisper. "Thank you very much for your kindness, miss. I am going," and he stumbled down the narrow porch, his honest eyes blurred by a strange mist as Judge Randall and Dr. Vance came up the cottage path.

"It's all settled, my dear," said the Judge to Mildred. "The doctor will go with us, and when the president of the road learned my granddaughter was among the injured he telegraphed that his own private car would be at our disposal to-morrow morning."

"Private car!" muttered Daffy to himself grimly, as he strode out of the gate. "I've got in among the high flyers, sure enough. That was a downright nice girl, though, high flyer or not. Lord, I'm glad it wasn't Weasel lying there!" and the speaker paused in the darkness to wipe the

cold beads of sweat from his brow. "Talk about yer spook stories! Thar ain't nothing in them," added Daffy. "I felt jist cold sure that Weasel Graeme was in that house living or dead to-night. I could have sworn I heard her call my name! But I won't give up yet. For if she was in that train, and Nick Delven said he sold her her ticket and saw her board it—if she was in that blasted train, they showed me the names of everybody that got off safe and hers wasn't there. If she was in that cussed train——"

Daffy's keen wits were not in their usual working order to-night, and he had to stop to mop his brow and rub his head to see things clearly. "Why, she must be round here somewhar *hurt*!"

Hurt! Ah, it was a light word, Daffy knew, for what he feared. Hurt! he had been all over the little village questioning, seeking. There was but one place to look for the *hurt* now. And there, down in the dark gorge where the swift foaming waters swept on their springtime flood, Daffy worked all night with the rest, dragging the bed of the creek, searching among the sharp hidden rocks, the heaped débris of the drifting wreckage, the long grass and sedges of the banks for ghastly finds—crushed sometimes almost out of human

semblance. But Weasel was not among them. Daffy would have known that red gold hair even in depths of darkness like this.

Worn out with the sickening horror of the night, the searching party were resting on a stretch of grassy bank, drinking the hot coffee that had been sent down from a neighboring farmhouse, when the whistle of the morning train was heard in the distance.

"She do be coming by the river track," said one of the men. "Big bugs aboard thar, I guess, that kin switch off whar they please."

"It's a special," said another. "A special with the railroad president's private car. I heern say up thar at Widder Barnes that thar was some grand folks down last night, looking for a lady that was pretty bad hurt in the smash. Thar, they're a-bringing her out now."

And Daffy stood up with the rest to look at this new feature in the grisly scene, where death, grimly impartial, had stricken down lowly and lofty alike. An anxious group was emerging from the little cottage on the hillside. Two men were carrying an improvised stretcher, carefully curtained from the light, doctor and nurse walked beside it, while

Judge Randall, his son, and Mildred, gave unmistakable tone to the gloomy cortege.

"That's them," continued the previous speaker with a nod. "Ole man's a General, or a Judge or something very big, and the Widder was telling my wife that he was turrible cut up. It's his granddaughter that was hurt, and when the president heard who 'twas he was drefful cut up, too. Ordered off this special with his own car to take them home. Going to take doctor and nurse with 'em, and that means a wad of money, you kin bet—Widder said she heerd the old man say he'd save the girl if it cost every cent he hed."

A pang shot through Daffy's honest heart at the words. Ah, if he could have saved, too, saved the girl he loved, the girl who must have been swept away by the flood to depths he could not reach! And then, for the strain had been terrible even to his rude strength, he sank back against a tree and stood there strangely faint and trembling, while the stretcher was borne down the hill and lifted tenderly into the palatial car and the "special" took its winged way over roads cleared by telegraph for its unbroken flight.

"Queer!" said Daffy, rousing himself with an effort, and reaching for another cup of coffee.

"Queer how durned shaky I am this morning. Ef I believed them spook-raising fakirs I'd say Weasel had been a-calling on me all night and had just guv up and said good-by. Thar ain't nothing more to be done here as I can see, so I mout as well make tracks for home and break things easy to that old woman at the Road House."

But when, pale and worn and strangely shaken still, Daffy reached the Road House late next evening with his hopeless tidings he found it deserted. The windows were closed, the door locked and barred; no answer came to knock or call. In dire perplexity he made his way to old Huldah's cabin, quarter of a mile distant.

"Ole missus done gone, sah, nobody knows whar. She druv over de cow and de hens yest'day morning, and tole me to take keer ob 'em, for she was gwine away."

"Did she hear—did she know?" asked Daffy excitedly.

"'Bout Miss Weasel being killed in de keers? Yes, sah, yes, dey showed her de papers and she read em through. Lord, Lord, but 'twas drefful! An' dey ain't found dat poor chile's corpse or nuthing! Drown dead, dey say, in de ribber, whar she'll never come up. Lord, Lord, 'twas enuff to

crack pore ole missus' brain. Couldn't stay here nohow, I spec. Yes, she dun gone, sah. Ole miss allus mouty res'less and cantankerous. She dun gone, nobody knows whar."

And Daffy could only retrace his steps through the dim forest path that led him back to the old house standing black and silent in the deepening shadows. He stood for a moment at the broken gate, looking with a wisdom born of anguish at the dreary scene, the gloomy house, the tottering porch, the darkening pines, the weed-grown wastes stretching around ruined barn and outhouse—the graves in the deep hollow under the yew.

"Poor little Weasel!" there was a hoarse sob in Daffy's low voice. "She hedn't any sort of show fust or last. She hedn't any show."

A harsh caw seemed to mock his words. There was a flutter of black wings from the roof of the porch, and Rip perched on the gate-post, his wise head askew.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Daffy, startled. "You're left behind, are you, old chap? I guess I'll reclaim my right to you. Come on, then," and he took the crippled bird in his arms, where Rip, as if realizing the situation, nestled contentedly. "I'll take care of you, old pardner, for—for her sake.

Wal, thar don't seem much left to me but that ar machine of mine. I'll make it work, consarn it! I'll make it grind, or know the reason why."

* * * * *

Meanwhile, the "special" train had kept on its swift flight over mountain and river and valley, bearing Judge Randall and his party home. Resting on a silken curtained couch, whose springs and cushions deadened every shock and jar, fanned by gentle breezes, every pulse-beat watched by anxious attendants, Barbara Graeme was borne through a strange shadowy dream world to her new life.

Dimly conscious of rest, soft, luxurious rest, such as her rough young life had never known, of tender care that seemed to lift her again to her dead mother's arms and breast, of a strange delicious soothing of pain and stress and fear that held brain and heart and nerve in a charmed spell, she was swept on and on to her fate.

"I have never seen such splendid vitality in so frail and delicate a form," said Dr. Vance, as he and the Judge stood on the observation platform the first night of their journey. "At first I dreaded the worst, I confess, but now I feel that all danger is past. Miss—Miss Kent——"

"Randall," corrected the Judge. "She will bear my—her mother's name, in future."

"Miss Randall," continued the doctor, "is rallying wonderfully after the shock. With her it was a case purely of shock, complete, nervous shock. She will feel the effects for some time, of course—indeed it may be a year or more before she entirely recovers."

"You mean she will be an invalid?" asked the Judge anxiously.

"Scarcely that, as invalidism is usually understood," was the reply. "But you must be prepared for periods of depression, nervousness, perhaps even hysteria—melancholia. These would be only a natural sequence to a terrible experience of this kind. But with her splendid vitality, as I said, all these symptoms will pass. It is quite unnecessary, I am sure, to bespeak your indulgence for them."

"Quite unnecessary," answered the Judge. "I understand fully that she will need all my care and tenderness, poor child. Through most unfortunate family differences she has been neglected too long, but now she has come into her own again—into her own."

"And she is going to live—to live," said Mildred gladly, as a little later, she stood in her grand-

father's place on the platform, the Judge having withdrawn from the chill of the mountain air. "Oh, how wonderful, how beautiful, life will seem to her!"

"I trust so," answered the doctor, who found this bright-eyed fellow-traveler most beguiling; "but one can never forecast life, even under the rosiest seemings. One of the happiest creatures I ever knew was a lame boothblack."

"And one of the happiest I ever knew a blind woman," said Mildred, softly. "But that is different, of course. Sister Celestia had light of another world to cheer her darkness."

"And does it?" asked Dr. Vance, doubtfully.

"Does it?" echoed Mildred, laughing. "I would not like to try to hide anything from her. She can read one's heart and soul."

"What—a cloistered clairvoyant?" said the gentleman in surprise.

"Oh, no, no!" said Mildred, quickly. "I don't mean anything like that. Sister Celestia—" she paused, and then added, "but you would not understand."

"Try me," he said. "I have always had an attraction for the occult."

"Ah, there it is again," said the girl earnestly.

"The mock of the materialist. And yet it seems to me that the doctor—one whose work lies at the very threshold of an unseen world, would catch gleams from beyond the gates."

"We do, and mistrust them," answered Vance, gravely. "Gleams do not satisfy the scientific mind. It asks strong light and surety. But we are drifting far from the blind nun and her clear vision."

"Not so far," answered Mildred, "for she has the light, the surety, of which you speak. If she can read hearts it is only with the sweet, saintly sympathy that such light and surety give, and of which you confessedly know nothing, Dr. Vance."

"Don't relegate me to the 'outer darkness' hopelessly," he said gravely. "I am not the mocking materialist you think. I say only that glimpses, gleams of a better life, do not suffice me, and we have nothing more. There, I have shocked you, I am sure. Look out, Miss Randall. To me and many like me life is like these mountains we are crossing, peak above peak, ridge beyond ridge, dim, vast, giant battlements, that seem to defy man's puny strength. We master them in a way, it is true. We have learned to stretch one slender rail of steel through the fastnesses, to scale the height,

to leap the gorge, to bridge the stream. We have learned to sweep on as we are doing now, our searchlight blazing through the darkness, our harsh cry of triumph waking the silence, but beyond—beyond the narrow path we have broken, all is night—impenetrable night.”

“You forget the stars,” she said, softly.

“Too far,” he answered; “too far and too faint, Miss Randall. They only add to the mystery.”

“That is because you have not learned to read them,” she said. “They have guided wiser men than you, Dr. Vance.”

“Where?” he asked.

“Over the desert wastes to the hills of Judea,” she answered, brightly. “Surely you remember how those wise men of old declared ‘We have seen His star in the East and are come to adore Him’?”

There was a moment's pause. Vance had heard sermons and exhortations without number. His own good mother, a devout churchwoman, had made Bible reading a family duty—but never had a quotation struck him with such sweet and simple force. Faith undoubting, unquestioning, unhesitating—was this the guide through Life's darkness? Faith that saw His star in the East and followed to adore?

"Do you know there is something very, very strong in that sentence?" he said, thoughtfully. "A beautiful piece of Oriental imagery."

"Yes, I have always loved those dear old kings," said Mildred simply. "They were not 'afraid,' like the shepherds. I do not understand being 'afraid.'"

"Then fate has been most kind to you," Vance answered. "I think my patient, your cousin, does. More than once in her brief moments of consciousness I have caught a look of fright, almost terror on her face that I found most distressing."

"Poor girl," said Mildred, gently, "I do not wonder after such a terrible shock! We can only hope and pray that she will forget."

"Forget!" Ah, the kindly wish was breathed in vain. Already, as that frightened glance Dr. Vance had caught betokened, his patient was beginning to remember, dimly, fitfully, as one sees through breaking clouds. Barbara was realizing that this new world into which she had ventured held her in tender toils which she knew not how to break.

Watched, tended, guarded, like some new-found treasure she was borne on to the beautiful home of Elinor Kent's dying dream, where the new-leaved

oaks made flickering shadows on lawn and terrace, and the roses were in bud on porch and trellis, and the river took its shining way to the sea. Wide, airy rooms had been made ready for the newcomer, all things prepared for her comfort. Mrs. Randall was full of womanly sympathy, the old family servants stood about, eager and anxious to serve, as "Miss Nellie's girl," pale, helpless, tremulous with the excitement of her journey, was lifted over the threshold of her new home, borne up the wide, polished stair to her own beautiful room that had been filled with welcoming flowers, soothed by quieting "drops" into restful sleep.

"There is no further cause for alarm," Dr. Vance declared as, after leaving his patient in the hands of the family physician, he made his adieu. "She has borne the journey remarkably, all dangerous symptoms have disappeared. The atmosphere of a home like this will do the rest."

"Must you go at once? Can't you wait a while under the roses, too?" said Mildred, cordially.

"No," he said, looking into her clear eyes as he held her hand for a moment in a parting clasp. "I would lose my train, I fear. That train of which I told you last night that bears me on through the darkness."

"Lose it!" she answered gayly, "and trust to the stars."

"I dare not—yet," he said in a low, earnest voice. "But you have shown me how pure and clear can be their guiding light. We have had a delightful journey together, Miss Randall, one I can never forget."

And then as if fearing to say more he dropped her hand abruptly and was gone.

Miss Randall looked after him with a vague regret.

"Now if I were not the light, frivolous being I am, I might have impressed that man," she thought. "Impressed him seriously. I had the chance to give him a real good sermon last night and he would have listened to me. Bess Dixon would have repeated the Catechism from cover to cover, I know. But I never could preach—" Mildred shook her pretty head ruefully, "though it does seem dreadful for a nice man like that to live in such pagan darkness."

And Miss Randall turned back into the house, all unconscious that into that pagan darkness she had sent a ray of light that would brighten into perfect day.

CHAPTER VIII

NELLIE

AND now the roses were in bloom, rioting over porch and trellis, wreathing window and gable, arching doorway and garden-gate. The June breeze, laden with their fragrance, stole into the spacious rooms, where "Nellie," as loving voices had learned to call the pale newcomer at Rosecrofte, was being nursed back to life and health.

"Your mother's home, my dear," Judge Randall had said the first day of her coming, when the gray eyes had looked around with wide wonder. "It is yours now. Her home, her name, her place in my lonely heart. You must trust us, love us, my little girl, as we all will love you."

And slowly, for she was very ill and weak; painfully, like some frail flower withered by rude transplanting; timidly, as if half blinded by the strange sunshine flooding her life, Judge Randall's "Nellie" took her new name and place, at first semi-consciously, with only a dull comprehension of the light and love and watchful tenderness that soothed and banished fear, then with growing

knowledge and clearer vision and at last perfect realization of all that had been and was.

There were days when the patient's strange restlessness defied the nurse's skill. Nights when the temperature rose and the heart-beat puzzled the doctor. Hours when "Nellie" seemed to shrink in nervous fear from those who loved her most. But all the while the broken roots were striking deep into the rich, warm soil, the flower lifting its head with passionate eagerness to the long-denied sun. All the while, with ever-growing, ever-steadying resolve, "Nellie" was holding to her name and place. All the while the new life was gripping her with closer, firmer bonds that she could not, dare not break.

There were moments when, waking suddenly from vivid dreams of the past, confession leaped to her lips, and was hushed there with soothing words. There were times when she felt she must cry out to the old man bending anxiously over her and tell all. But the horror, the shock seemed too great for her weakness—and as health and strength returned the clear mind quickened into new powers, the sharp-witted starveling of the Road House grasped and held with full consciousness all that she had won.

She was safe. Through strange shadows of death and darkness she had been swept securely into the harbor of her daring dreams. Unquestioned, undoubted she held the dead Elinor Kent's name and place.

On this fair day in June she sat propped up with pillows by the wide window of her beautiful room, looking out over the sunlit stretches of lawn and terrace, over rose-bower and rose-garden to the river, stretching a path of light to the far horizon. Illness had given a more delicate purity to the fair skin, had shadowed the cold gray eyes. In her soft, lace-trimmed negligée, with the red-gold hair rippling low upon her neck, Judge Randall, who had come into the room for a morning chat, thought his Nellie as lovely an old man's darling as he could wish for.

"Brightening up every day!" he said cheerily. "We will have you as well and strong as Milly herself in a few days more. No headache this morning?"

"None," was the low answer. "There are no aches any more. And—and it is so beautiful here—and you are all so good to me."

"Come, come, none of that, my little girl," said the Judge, noting the tremor in her voice. "None

of that. There is just one thing I want to say, and let us have it over and done with forever. All that I have, all that my money or power can command, is yours, my dear child, and I wish you to feel this, and accept it as your right; a right that has been too long and too harshly denied you. Beyond this," he took the little wan, wasted hand in his and stroked it tenderly, "this atonement, my dear, we will not look or think. Let the past be dead to us, little girl, dead and buried forever. We will never speak of it, if possible never think of it. Is that a bargain, my little girl?"

"Yes," the quick-drawn breath was almost a sob, "oh, yes, yes, I would like to forget if I could, if I could."

"You can, you shall." The Judge set his lips together resolutely. "We will both turn our eyes away from the darkness and never look back. Promise me, little girl. Come, you have never given me my name yet—say, 'I promise, grandfather.'"

"I—I—will try," was the tremulous answer that went to the old man's heart. "Oh, I will try not to look back—grandfather."

"There, then, that's settled," said the Judge. "Settled, signed, sealed forever," and he lifted the

white hand he held to his lips. "Now we'll talk about pleasanter things. The doctor says you can go out next week, and I have ordered a pretty pony carriage from Baltimore, so that you can drive around when you are a little stronger. We'll buy a saddle horse a little later. I would not trust you on Milly's yet, though in a year I expect you'll be taking a fence as boldly as she does. And we'll have roses in those pale cheeks that will outbloom any in Rosecrofte."

And the Judge chatted on tenderly, while the girl's shadowed eyes rested upon the river, the shining river of which the dead Elinor had dreamed—the river that must sweep on and on in its radiant, sunlit way over rock and shoal and rapid and fall, but never, never turn back.

He had asked the promise. She had given it, and she would keep her word.

* * * * *

"I have come to be scolded," said Milly, as she dropped into the invalid's room an hour later, her hands filled with roses. "But it's all Grandy's fault, my dear, so you'll have to take it out on him. I've been shopping for you, Nellie."

"Shopping!" echoed "Nellie" in astonishment.

"Yes," answered Milly. "It would set my teeth

on edge to have any woman shop for me, I know, but Grandy would have it. And he gave me a check, dear—well, that was a temptation, I confess. I do so love to buy pretty things without stint. So there's a lot of feminine frippery coming down this evening that you can send back if you don't like. I thought—"Mildred paused with a soft sympathy in her bright eyes, "you would rather wear white this summer."

"I would rather wear white," repeated the invalid, feeling as if she were the echo of a silent voice. "Yes, I—I would rather wear white."

And when, a little later, the "white" fripperies came, "Nellie" could not repent the choice. Daintily exquisite fripperies they were, fit indeed for a fairy queen; simple little gowns of linen with the Parisian stamp on them, snowy little frocks rich with handwork, dainty garments billowy with frou frous and lace.

"Oh, mama, dear," confided Milly afterward, "if you could have seen her, if you could have seen Nellie's face as Delorme opened those boxes. The bewilderment, the amazement! And really, I don't much wonder. Such an outfit for a girl who, I suppose, never had a gown that cost more than five dollars in her life. It was enough to turn her

head. But it didn't a bit. She just sat there with a faint flush on her cheek and an odd light in her eyes, fairly breathless with surprise, I could see, but steady under it all, and when I asked if she liked my choice for her, she said, 'Oh, yes; thank you very much—you could not have pleased me better.' Really," added Milly, with a half-vexed laugh, "as if an eight-hundred-dollar summer outfit was a mere matter of course."

"It's pride, my dear," answered her mother sagely, "the Randall pride. This girl has it strong in her, I can see. And I am glad of it. It will make things easier for us. It would have been dreadful if we had found her the poor-spirited sort of creature that I feared at first. I don't altogether take to her, I must confess—still, it might be worse."

"Very much worse," answered Mildred, laughingly.

"But we'll find her embarrassing enough as it is," said the lady plaintively. "With no education, no social training, nothing that a girl in her new position ought to have——"

"Except a head of red gold hair and Grandy to back her with everything he has," said Mildred, gayly. "Mama, it's a dire forecast, but I proph-

esy your daughter's total eclipse by that same red head. It is going to take by storm."

"Impossible!" said the lady, impatiently.

"Just wait a year and see," answered Milly.

"Why, the girl has no claim to beauty at all," said Mrs. Randall.

"Wait and see," laughed Milly again.

"Nonsense!" said her mother, sharply. "My dear, beside you she will always be like some wild weed to a rose."

"Ah, but wild weeds blossom strangely, mama," said Milly. "Just wait and see." And bending her own queenly form, she dropped a light, laughing kiss on her mother's brow and was gone, leaving that good lady rather shaken from her usual placid calm.

For Mrs. Gilbert Randall had from the first found this break of the "wild weed" into the family garden disconcerting.

"I will be held responsible for her, of course," thought the good lady, who had walked flowery paths hedged by stately conventions and traditions all her forty years of life. "If she were only a child that we could put to school! But a girl old enough to be out—and I don't suppose she knows a finger-bowl from a drinking glass."

But when, a few days later, a slight, graceful figure with red-gold hair rippling back from a pale, delicate face appeared in the dining-room and was given place at the Judge's right hand, Mrs. Gilbert discovered that her fears had been unfounded. The sharp eyes of the little Weasel of old took in every detail of that luxurious table in one comprehensive glance. Lonely little Barbara Graeme had not pored over the heaps of old books in the garret of the Road House all in vain. She had not steadied and trained every shrinking nerve during these long weeks of convalescence to fail in their mastery now. There were some little crudities, it is true, for it was a far call from the old black-beamed kitchen where Gran stirred her bean soup to the wainscoted dining-room, with its glittering silver engraved with the Randall crest, its dainty meal served on china that was a family heirloom.

But if "Nellie" was startled at the reverent "grace" said at Rosecroft according to old Catholic custom; if she found old Scip's noiseless service a little confusing, if she got spoons and forks a trifle mixed, there was grandfather at her side, tender, watchful, high-bred, to conceal every *gaucherie*. And so quick and keen were the wak-

ened wits that in two days Nellie's table etiquette was without a flaw. In a week the slight, graceful figure had found its place in the household, and the Judge's little girl was holding her own with a grasp that every day grew stronger, surer, steadier, a grasp that, deep down in her soul, Barbara Graeme vowed should never weaken or loose.

Though she often shivered and shrank still under the kind clear gaze of grandfather's eye—though "Aunt Marian" was a chilling shadow in her new sunshine, and Milly's glad, girlish laugh rang mockingly in her ear, she was striking deeper every day, every hour, and all her starved, stunted nature was waking into new life and bloom.

Lottie, the neat-handed yellow maid who had been detailed to wait on the invalid after the trained nurse's departure, boasted proudly of her charge in the servants' hall.

"De land, Miss Nellie is a-picking up. I nebba seen anything like it. It sort ob skeered me at fust to go into her room—she lay there looking so white and thin and dead, but she's a-coming up, shuah."

"Dat she is," agreed Scip, "but do what she will she'll nebba come up to Miss Milly, chile."

"Why won't she?" asked Lottie, defiantly.

"She ain't de pattern," answered Scip, nodding his head. "You kin grow and twist and bend folks ez you please, but de Lord dun make de pattern, and dat won't nebba change."

"Dat's so, chile, dat's so," came old Aunt Dill's cracked voice from the chimney corner. "And she ain't de Randall pattern, shuah. I nussed 'em all, and I know. Nebba was hair like dat in de fambly befoah. Dey had gold and yaller and brown, but nebba har and skin like fire in de snow. It's witch har, chile. None ob de Randalls ebba hed witch har befo'!"

"Witch hair! And what is that, Aunt Dill?" asked Lottie, curiously.

"What de witches hez, chile," answered the old woman, "and dey makes webs and charms and halters wif it. I heern my ole mother say dar ain't no rope in de world strong as a strand ob witch har. None ob de Randall blood ever hed it befo', and it don't mean no good luck, chile, I know."

And so, with only faint shadows, like summer cloudlets floating over the glorious sunshine, with soft winds breathing fragrance around her, with love and wealth and power guarding her from every rude or blighting touch, Barbara Graeme's blossoming began.

The pony carriage came, and she was soon driving over the smooth, well-kept roads with Milly or her grandfather, a dainty little figure always, in spotless white, with the "witch har," which, despite Aunt Dill's dark forecast, Lottie learned to twist and coil like "Miss Milly's" round the graceful head. For the grace visible even in those old days when the gray sweater muffled the slender form was Miss Nellie's abiding charm now. There was a poise about her that suggested the lift of a flower to the sun.

And now that all shadow of illness had passed, Rosecrofte began to brighten into its usual summer gladness. Gay guests fluttered in for tea, for luncheon; statelier ones came to call and dine, graver ones gathered around the Judge on porch and in smoking-room to discuss weighty questions, for politically as well as socially Roger Randall still held his place as leader. And grave and gay and stately alike found the new arrival at Rosecrofte most interesting.

The sad story of Elinor Randall was well-known in county society, and though gossip may have been busy behind doors, reviving the unhappy episode of Randall family history, there was a

general murmur of flattery and felicitation from all visitors to Rosecroft.

"A most charming little lady," declared old Colonel Reed, impressively.

"A very interesting face," said Lawyer Deane thoughtfully; "strangely interesting."

"Look up, my dear," said old Madam Van Arsdale, tapping the girl's cheek lightly with her feather fan. "I knew and loved your mother well. You're not like her, not at all like her. You haven't her beauty," said the keen-eyed old woman frankly. "But don't worry about that, my dear. You've got a head where she had only a heart, I can plainly see."

"Oh, Milly, do tell us all about her," pleaded Bess Dixon and Leonie Duval eagerly. "Her mother ran away with a music teacher, we know, and your grandfather would not forgive her, and he found this girl nearly killed in a railroad accident. But what is she like, Milly? Where did she get that hair—and that style?"

"I think Delorme is responsible for the style," said Mildred; "good clothes will do that. But the hair is heaven's own gift. Isn't it beautiful?"

"Beautiful! It's maddening," said Leonie. "It makes one feel like tearing out one's own towy

locks and buying a copper-colored wig. To have a cousin with hair like that resurrected by a dotting grandfather, and decked out in Delorme's best would be really more than I could bear. But you are an angel, Milly."

"Not at all," answered Milly, "I have had all, even more than I want, always, and poor little Nellie has had nothing—not even Faith, girls. I don't think she ever says or even knows a prayer. Ah, she has had a dark, sad, pitiful life compared with ours, and we are trying to make up to her for all the happy years she has lost."

"Doesn't she go to church with you?" asked Bess Dixon.

"To church, my dear? She was never in a church in her life, so she told me yesterday, and I spoke of something being a sin, and she positively did not know what I meant! I doubt whether she even believes in God. But we'll change all that, of course. She is going to Mass with us to-morrow, and is quite willing to receive instructions. I am going to take her to Mont-merci, and introduce her to dear Sister Celestia. That sweet blind saint is the best guide to heaven I know."

Meanwhile, all unconscious of the tender plot

weaving for her slumbering soul, "Nellie" was leaning against one of the rose-wreathed pillars of the porch, listening to Allston Leigh, who had come down with his aunt Van Arsdale for a recuperative week's end at hospitable Rosecroft. Girls and roses were very well in their way, but Mr. Leigh, who had been the crack oarsman of his college crew ten years ago, felt the olden lure of the blue waters shining in the sun.

"And you have not ventured on that beautiful river yet, Miss Randall?"

"No," she answered, and a faint shadow flitted over her delicate face. "I have been very ill, you know, and am not accustomed to boating."

"Then let me introduce you to the most delightful pastime known," he said, eagerly. "There is a little skiff down at the wharf that seems made for a fairy queen. Let us have a sunset row. I am a veteran with the oars, so Mrs. Randall will trust you with me, I am sure."

"Certainly," said Aunt Marian, who stood nearby talking to old Madam Van Arsdale. "You have only an hour before the sun goes down, so don't go very far, Allston. Nellie is not strong yet, and there is a chill on the river at twilight."

"And take this shawl, my dear," said old Madam

Van Arsdale, flinging her richly embroidered Canton crape shoulder wrap around the white-robed girl. "You will need it, I am sure."

"Oh, I'll bring her back safe and unchilled, I promise," said Allston, lightly, and then together they went down the soft green-shaded slopes that led to the river—the river of which the dead Elinor had so often dreamed, the river on whose shining waters this mock Elinor was venturing with Allston Leigh as guide. There was no voice to whisper warning as they went together through the westering sunlight to meet their fate.

CHAPTER IX

ON THE RIVER

THE fairy skiff lay at the wharf, its stern heaped high with gay, silken cushions, for Leonie and Bess had been drifting idly over the summer waves all morning.

Allston Leigh helped his companion to a seat, and then slipping in took up the oars and began to pull with strong, skilled stroke out into mid-stream.

The west was aflame with sunset splendor that the waters mirrored back joyously. The river seemed a shimmering path of gold and rose and amethyst, sweeping onto the unknown. Leaning back on her silken cushions, wrapped in the soft fragrant folds of Mrs. Van Arsdale's shawl, the pale-faced girl at the stern was conscious of a delicious sense of freedom as the gables and groves of Rosecrofte were left far behind her, and she was borne on and on, lightly as the thistle-down that floated in the mountain breeze, the thistle-down that a barefooted little girl used to chase in the long ago.

Ah, she had been playing a part so long, playing

it warily and wisely, as the old grandmother had said she would; for weeks she had been speaking, moving, almost breathing with fear and care that the wild Weasel of old had never felt or known. Now she was off the scene for a brief hour. This stranger would not notice if she dropped mask and shackles and breathed again as Barbara Graeme. She drew a long, fluttering breath, like the runner who takes new wind, and sat up among her cushions straight and alert.

"This is fine," she said. "It is the best thing I have tried since I came to Rosecroft. Give me an oar and let me row, too."

"And capsize the boat?" the gentleman said, looking at her with laughing eyes. "No ventures this evening, Miss Nellie. I am pledged to bring you safe home. Rowing against the current is harder work than you think."

"Why do you row against it, then?" she asked.

"I like the pull," he answered. "It's no fun to drift with the stream, though if you are going in for boating I advise you to begin that way. Young ladies always do."

"Do they?" she asked, with an odd little laugh. "It's a very tiresome thing to be a young lady, I find."

"I have always thought so myself," he answered, the laugh flashing again into his dark-brown eyes. "Still, that is a masculine viewpoint. Though really, in your case—" he paused.

"Well, what of my case?" The gray eyes met his with fearless question. It had been long weeks since they had dared to challenge or question like this.

"I was about to add that in your case young ladyhood seems rather a dazzling fate," the gentleman answered.

"Because it lifted me from beggary, you mean?" she said, quickly.

"Really, no—I didn't mean anything of the sort," was the startled rejoinder.

"It did, of course, as every one knows," she continued, with the little hard laugh of the Weasel of old. "It's a painful subject, I suppose, at Rosecrofte. But I don't mind talking about it in the least. It is a dazzling fate, as you say, for a girl who has been dead, *dead* poor all her life——"

"There are worse things than poverty," said Mr. Leigh, driven to platitude by this startling frankness.

"What are they?" was the quick returning question.

"Sorrow, suffering, shame, sin—oh, there is quite a category of them," he answered.

"And poverty is the mother of them all," she said, with slow distinctness.

"I can't quite agree to that," said Mr. Leigh, who began to find this somewhat curious conversation interesting. "There's a great deal of sorrow and sin and suffering with which poverty has nothing to do. We don't see it, for it is rather the fashion in the gay world to hide the unpleasant things of life. Perhaps some of these days you yourself will learn how to wear a mask—though it would be a pity, I must confess," he added, the smile lighting his strong face again: "you are so much more charming without it."

She did not answer, she scarcely seemed to hear his words. Leaning forward in the old attitude, her chin resting on her hand, she was gazing moodily out to the east, where already violet shadows were gathering, and one silver star trembled in the paling splendor between night and day. Was it the same star that shone through the gap in the pines on the grave under the yew? A shiver ran through the slender form, and she drew Madam Van Arsdale's shawl closer about her. Something

in its soft touch, its delicate fragrance recalled her from the old life to the new.

"What—you feel the chill already?" said her companion, anxiously. "Then we must turn back."

"Not yet, not quite yet," she said, with a quick-drawn breath. "Let us go a little farther—to that point where the trees jut into the stream."

"Chapel Point? That is four miles at least," he answered. "The darkness would catch us indeed, and I would not know how to face Mrs. Randall's just wrath. I have felt its terrors," he continued lightly. "I incurred it once about a dozen years ago. I took Miss Milly out skating and we broke through the ice, and though we got home in safety, the thrilling experience was visited upon my devoted head. So I feel most reluctantly that it is best for us to turn back. You see I hold a certain responsibility at Rosecroft. I spent many a pleasant vacation day here in my boyhood," he continued, feeling, perhaps, that his companion's singular frankness claimed some return in kind. "Aunt Van Arsdale and Mrs. Randall are old and dear friends, but since the courts have got their grip upon me, I have to give all my time to fighting the dry, dull battles of the law."

"Are they always dry and dull?" asked the girl,

her gray eyes deepening with the shadow of that far off memory that had darkened her young life.

"Not always," answered Leigh. "Sometimes they are infinitely worse—pathetic, heartrending. I have one on hand now—a woman even yet blind to the crime that has put her in the grasp of the law. Yet for years that woman has forged, stolen, borne a false name, held a false place."

"A false name, a false place?" echoed Leigh's companion, with a quick catch of her breath.

"Yes. She had a widowed sister entitled to a life interest in her husband's estate. This sister died while the two were traveling abroad in some obscure little Swiss town, and the other concealed her death from the rightful heirs, assumed her name, and drew her money. She had a crippled son, you see, for whom she was willing to lie and steal."

"Oh, do you call it *that*?" asked the girl, tremulously.

"I do—I must," answered Leigh. "What else is it, Miss Nellie? With all my sympathy for the poor woman, I realize she is a criminal without defense, except on the plea of pity and ignorance—which do not stand in these prosaic days, when every one should know right from wrong."

"And—and—what will happen to her now?"

There was an odd strain in the low question.

"I am afraid it will be impossible to save her from prison—if she lives. But, happily for herself, she will not live. The boy died last winter and she, too, is dying fast, I think of a broken heart. You are shivering all over!" he broke off his story in quick self-reproach. "I have kept you out too long and yet we did not go so far. Let me heap the cushions closer about you. Good heavens, you have a regular chill," he added in dire dismay, for his companion had buried her face in her hands and was shaking from head to feet.

Then as suddenly she lifted her head, and burst into a laugh, a strange, elfish laugh, mocking, defiant.

"There, it's all over," she said. "I get these shakes sometimes, but they don't last. I just—just grit my teeth and down them—a trick I learned in the old days, before my dazzling fate caught me, Mr. Leigh. Don't tell anybody, I beg, or I will have six doctors sitting in judgment on me to-morrow. I am all right again—all right. It is time to go home, isn't it? I have been very sick and I am a little weak at times yet, but I am grow-

ing strong—stronger and stronger every day. Don't tell about—the chill."

"I promise on one condition—that you take a hot drink and go to bed like the half-sick girl you are. Otherwise I turn the six doctors loose on you."

"Oh, I will do all you say," she laughed, as he helped her from the boat and they passed up the grassy way to the house, where she vanished with a gay nod up the polished stairs.

Leigh saw her no more that night. But a little white-robed figure with red-gold hair flitted persistently through his dreams. She was ill, perhaps, and hiding it with that ungirlish strength of which he had a glimpse. What a strange little creature she was, with her changing gray eyes, her frank speech, her mocking laugh. He had never seen any one quite like her. Ah, the spell had fallen, the spell of the red-gold "witch hair" that old Aunt Dill feared. The spell that honest Daffy, hammering far into the night on his machine to dull the sore pain in his faithful heart, felt that not even death could break.

While up in her spacious, beautiful room, with the fragrant whisper of the roses stealing in her window, the witch of the red-gold hair lay staring

with wide open, sleepless eyes into the darkness. What was it he had said of that other woman who had stolen name and place? Thief, liar, criminal! The stern, cruel words seemed beating like a fever pulse on her brain—thief, liar! But it was not the same—she had taken nothing but what was given, almost forced upon her. She had said nothing, but let Fate take its own course—her dazzling Fate, he had called it.

Was it dazzling—blinding her, leading her on to perils she could not see?

And when at last the gray eyes closed in absolute weariness, it was only to send the sleeper wandering through troubled dreams. She was back again in the old pine woods, back at the broken gate, Rip perched upon her shoulder, the weed-grown road stretching into the shadowy distance. But the tall figure that came striding on, with his arms full of roses, was not Daffy, but Allston Leigh.

* * * * *

“You look a little pale this morning, Nellie,” said the Judge, pinching her cheek lightly. “I am afraid all these gay young people are too much for my little girl’s strength. Do you feel well enough to go to church?”

"Church!" She started. She had quite forgotten her promise. Sunday had been like all other days at the Road House and she had never heeded its coming. She was not yet quite used to its regular observance at Rosecrofte, where everybody went to Mass at the old church at Chapel Point—even Scipio and Aunt Dill, who headed the dusky ranks in the servants' gallery that had been filled by Randall retainers for more than a hundred years.

"Will you count heads, please, Grandy," said Mildred, "and tell us how we are all to get to church? This is a thoroughly Roman gathering and we are all bound to go, except perhaps Nellie."

"And why is she not bound to go, too?" asked the Judge, gravely. "That is, if she feels well enough for the long drive."

"I was about to suggest that if there is any difficulty in our numbers I can row some of the ladies to the Point. Perhaps it would be easier for Miss Nellie than the long drive." It was Allston Leigh who spoke and Judge Randall answered approvingly.

"The very thing, my boy. It will be easier for her, in fact, no fatigue at all. So we will trust our

little girl to you and the rest of us will pack in the carriages."

"You see I managed it," said Leigh an hour later as he helped his special charge into the boat. "I determined that you should have the row that I had to refuse you so sternly last evening."

"I suppose I should say thank you," she answered, "but it isn't the same thing this morning at all. I don't want to go to church."

"You do not!" he exclaimed.

"No," she answered, slowly, "not at all. It will be awfully stupid and solemn, I am sure. And it's such a warm day. Would they mind it much, do you think, if we should just drift down that little creek in the shade until they all came home?"

"I am afraid your grandfather would," answered the gentleman.

"Well, then, I suppose we will have to go," said the young lady, reluctantly. "I don't exactly see why. I can't sing hymns or pray, for I don't know how. And preaching is so tiresome. I went to camp-meeting once, and I simply couldn't keep awake."

Leigh shot a swift glance at the speaker to see if she were jesting, but the gray eyes met his without a gleam of mirth.

"Then—then you are not a Catholic at all?" he said, quietly. "You see, all the Randalls are. They have been for generations. In fact, I never heard of one who was not."

"That means that I must be one too," she said, with a little sigh. "Well, I don't suppose it will make much difference. I can stand going to church once a week."

"I am afraid that won't be quite enough," he said quietly. "To be a Catholic means much more than that."

"Does it?" she asked. "What?" Again the gray eyes looked into his with absolute frankness in their gaze.

"It will take a better, a wiser man than I am to answer that question fully," he replied with a grave smile. "I can only tell you that being a Catholic means a new vision of heaven and earth."

"Oh, if you mean I have to get religion, I'm out of it," she said, with a little hard laugh. "I could never go off into fits like those poor things I saw at the mourner's bench at camp-meeting. Never—I couldn't be such—such a fool! I thought that it was different—with Catholics."

"It is very different, as you will find out to-day," he answered, recalling with satisfaction that

there was a preacher of most persuasive eloquence visiting at St. Barnabas. "Even our little chapel is quite different from anything you have seen or known. It dates far back beyond the Revolution and was built by men who dared dangers of every kind—death itself—that they might teach the poor Indians the truth."

"The truth?" she echoed, anxiously, "about what?"

"God and heaven," he answered briefly.

"How did they know the truth?" she asked. "How can people know anything about God and heaven except what they read in books? And what is the use of knowing anyhow?—I can't see that it does any good."

"No. You can not see, yet," he replied, very gently. "But some day you will, I am sure. The light of truth is your inheritance, with all other good things, Miss Nellie. And here we are now—where that Light has been showing for more than two hundred years for all of your blood and name."

He pushed the skiff up to the Point as he spoke. A dozen more boats of every pattern were drawn up to the little wharf that jutted out into the stream; carriages, wagons, equipages of all sorts

stood out under the great trees that shaded the quaint little church. Judge Randall and his party had already arrived, and many a curious and distracted eye was turned upon the graceful little white-robed figure that Allston Leigh guided up to the family pew.

If altar and cross brought startling remembrance of that swift message to Graystone three months ago, the dainty little lady seated at "Grandfather's" side gave no sign. With a grave curiosity that might have passed for reverence, Nellie watched the opening of this strange service. Vested priest, surpliced acolyte, tapers, flowers, Latin chant, all were indeed as Allston Leigh had said—different from anything she had seen or known. But it was a picture that had no meaning for her, a scene in which she had no place or part. Until the chanting and the music ceased, and there was a sudden hush in the church and the preacher of the day stepped forward in his black cassock, the crucifix in his belt.

It was the missionary of Graystone Ridge, the priest whom Barbara Graeme had guided to Elinor Kent's dying bed. It was Father Lane.

CHAPTER X

THE SHADOW OF THE PAST

FOR a moment Barbara Graeme's strong heart seemed to stand still, the gray eyes darkened and dilated with terror. Church, altar, worshippers—all were in a dizzy whirl about her—only a mighty effort of will kept her from fainting outright.

Then the clear, piercing glance passed her by, the deep voice whose strange blessing had lingered through all change and peril in her ear, began to speak, and the warm blood rushed through the girl's chilled veins again. Did he know? Did he remember her? What had the dying girl told him in that hour they had spent together? Could those clear eyes recognize, in the dainty, white-robed little lady of Rosecroft, the shabby starveling of the Road House? What would happen when all this chanting and bowing and preaching were over? What would happen to her—Barbara Graeme?

Allston Leigh, stealing a look at the young face, wondered at its rigidity. Bess Dixon could

scarcely restrain her pious horror. Even Judge Randall was conscious of a painful shock, as, through all the solemn part of the Mass, his grandchild sat with unbowed head, unbent knee, with unseeing eye, unheeding ear. All around her was dim, shadowy, unreal—she was back again on her own mountain ridge, in her old gray sweater and sunbonnet. She was sitting on the soap-box in Daffy's store, hearing his talk of the strange preacher. She was standing in "Union Hall" at the mission altar; she was guiding this tall, grave-eyed speaker through the springtime woods to "help Elinor to die."

And when at last the Mass was over and the congregation rose to go, she started up like one roused from a dream.

"Take me home!" she whispered to Allston Leigh. "Please, quick, take me home."

"You are ill?" he said, anxiously.

"No, no," she answered. "I only want breath—air again."

And while the Randalls stopped to exchange greetings with old friends and neighbors, "Nellie" hurried her escort feverishly to the river where the little boat was waiting in the sunshine, and the shimmering waters stretched into dazzling dis-

tance. For the moment there seemed safety and escape. But the preacher! The preacher whom she had guided through the springtime woods to Elinor's dying bed. Every nerve thrilled with sickening suspense as the girl thought of what those clear eyes had seen, what that deep voice might tell.

What a story it would be for all those proud visitors gathered at Rosecroft to hear—what a story to rouse the Randall spirit into fierce passion—what a story to echo and re-echo forever in this great world where the daughter of Buck Graeme had forced entrance! A flush came into the pale cheek and a desperate glitter into the gray eyes as they looked down into the shining waters of which the dead Elinor had dreamed. "I wonder if it hurts much to—drown," she said, suddenly to her companion.

"There is no last word on that subject," he laughed, "but according to the most authentic information we have it is not a bad way to shake off this mortal coil."

"It would be such a quick way out of trouble," she said, "just to jump in and let the waters close over you and be done with—with everything and everybody. If you ever hear of me as missing, Mr.

Leigh, you may be sure that I am at the bottom of some nice, clear, deep river like this."

"Don't," he said, sharply, "don't talk like that. It makes my flesh creep."

"Does it?" she asked, with a short laugh. "It makes mine creep, too. Still, I think if I were driven very hard and there was no help—no hope for me—nothing but misery and disgrace—" she paused.

"I can't imagine anything more direful and impossible," he said, lightly. "In such a beautiful life as yours no such morbid fancies can find place." Then as if vaguely conscious of some gloomy undercurrent in her mood, he resolutely turned the conversation to lighter things, telling her of the old houses on the river banks, that they passed—of the Oriole club-house, whose gay pennant fluttered from the little island in midstream, of the "fête champêtre" that Aunt Van, as he called Madame Van Arsdale, gave at her old manor house, twenty miles away.

"It's the dear old lady's one yearly splurge, as the boys would call it. She is not rich enough to entertain as all her family traditions demand, and the manor is an utterly impossible place in winter. But for a short, bright time in summer the Van

Arsdale comes to her own again. When the white jasmine is in bloom, and the old house is wreathed with it, the doors are thrown open, the old family servants flock back from their little cabin to Missus' call—and the lady of the manor is at home again. The old furniture is uncovered, and the old silver polished, and the bats and beetles are driven off. Then, when all is ready, Aunt Van proceeds to entertain for two weeks in the good hospitable fashion of old.

"And really, in spite of her sixty odd years, it is quite a festive time, and the *fête champêtre* is the crown of it all. Everybody comes, young and old, but especially the young. It is a sort of presentation at court. To make it gayer, dear old Aunt Van insists on fancy dress, something quaint and picturesque. I was just thinking this morning I would like to choose your costume. You would make an ideal Undine."

"Undine!" She started. It had been one of the books in the Road House—it was one of the stories she knew. And the shadow deepened over the young face—darkened in the gray eyes. Ah, those old, old days, how bare and dread and lonely they had been, but oh, how free—how safe! How honest and true!

* * * * *

In the dim, shaded old priest's house of St. Barnabas', Father Lane and his host, Father Martin, were at dinner. They had been classmates years ago, and the brief meeting of to-day was a great pleasure to both.

"Well, I am glad to have seen old St. Barnabas' at last, even though I had to pay for it with a Sunday sermon," said Father Lane, smiling. "It's the slowest, the sleepest place I have struck for many a day. But all good people I am sure—that don't need waking up. I don't suppose there's a real mortal sinner in the whole parish. By the by, who are the great folks in your front pew? That fine-looking, white-haired old man and his family?"

"The Randalls, I suppose you mean—Judge Roger Randall. If you were a Marylander," laughed Father Martin, "that would be quite enough to say, but as you are not, I will say that the family came over with Lord Baltimore, after holding the Faith against fire and sword from the days of Catholic England."

"Randall, Randall," repeated Father Lane, thoughtfully. "There was a girl dressed in white beside the old gentleman that I have seen somewhere before. I can't just recall where, but the

remembrance was really a distraction to me. She had an unusual face and as it was lifted to the pulpit it impressed one strangely as if it were associated with some painful, almost tragic experience in the past."

"It was the Judge's new granddaughter, I presume," said Father Martin. "I call her new because she is only a recent acceptance by the family." And he proceeded briefly to sketch Elinor Kent's story. As it went on, a curious expression came over the missionary's face. The vague experience of the past began to take bewildering shape, a picture stood out with startling distinctness against the busy, crowded background of his strenuous life. The dim old room at the Road House, the pale, dying girl propped up among her pillows, confessing her pitiful sins into his fatherly ear, the guide who had called him to her, waiting on the dusky porch below.

"And this—this girl I saw to-day is the Judge's granddaughter, you say? She came a stranger to him—without—without proof?"

"Oh, there was undoubted proof," said Father Martin. "Letters, papers, everything were found with her at the time of the accident. The doctor telegraphed to the Judge at once and he went on

and claimed her. She was coming to him on the ill-fated train that was wrecked at Bixby's Creek. It was rather a close call for her, poor child. And she was ill for a long time. This is the first time she has been at church. She has grown up absolutely without Faith—with no religious training whatever. A strange offshoot for the Catholic Randalls."

"Strange, indeed," said Father Lane, in a low voice, "very strange! So she was willing to accept the family Faith—to receive religious instruction?"

"Quite willing, I understand. I advised the Judge to send her to the good Sisters at Mount Merci this summer. She has taken a strong hold of his heart already, and his self-reproach for his years of neglect is really pathetic. They tell me he will allow no allusion to the girl's past; he insists upon it being a closed book—forgiven and forgotten."

"An impossible condition," said Father Lane, gravely. "I fear they will find it so. Meantime, I trust, Father, you will be able to guide this stray lamb safe into your fold—God's light and grace can do all things. Now I have just time to catch my train, I believe, so I must say a quick and

rather brusque good-by. I open a retreat at Pittsburg to-morrow night. I am glad I have had this little peep at you, old friend, in your green pastures with your quiet flock. It will be a restful memory to take with me in the dusty highway." And after a few more pleasant parting words the old friends said good-by, and Father Lane turned his face toward busy scenes of labor, in which the vague doubt and perplexity caused by Judge Randall's "granddaughter" were soon effaced by the deeper shadows and fiercer light of the missionary life.

And so the "preacher" passed and gave no sign.

But there had been serious discussion in the party that rode home from St. Barnabas' on the wild weed of paganism they had transplanted to the family garden. Nellie's public denial of the Faith, as evinced by her attitude during Mass, was a shock that no Randall could stand.

"She must go to Mount Merci for instruction to-morrow," said the Judge decidedly. "It is not her fault, poor child, that she is ignorant or irrelevant. It is mine."

And late in the afternoon, when the day of fear and suspense was nearly over, the old man sought out the little white-robed figure that was gradually

growing to be the dearest thing to him on earth—the child of his remorse, his expiation, his dead daughter's neglected little girl.

He found her, apart from the rest, down by the waterside where the shelving mossy bank was shaded by leaning willows, and the river ran dark and deep in the leafy gloom. She was seated in a low fork of a tree, with her head resting against the rough trunk, a hard, set look on the young face and in the glittering gray eyes. She started up like some wild hunted thing at bay as she saw the old man coming toward her. But one glance into the kind face, into the tender eyes, and she sank back into her rustic seat all atremble.

"Nellie, my dear child, what is it?" he asked, nervously. "What are you doing down here alone? You must not steal off like this, my little girl. I want to see you bright, happy, and gay like the others."

"Like the others!" she echoed. "But I am not like them—I can never be. I—I do not know how," she added desperately. "They have always been happy—and I—I—" All the fear and despair of the day unnerved her; she burst into a wild passion of tears that wrung the old man's heart. And, as with fatherly tenderness he soothed her,

he told her of Mount Merci and the gentle Sisters there, where he would take her on the morrow, where she would learn new beautiful lessons that her past life had never taught.

And as the girl listened the fear that had troubled her all day died in her breast—the cold, despairing eyes kindled again.

“Oh, I will go,” she said, tremulously. “I will learn all things that you ask. I will try to think, to believe as you wish—if—if I can—if I can.”

“You can and will, dear child, I know,” he answered, “for the Faith is your heritage. It is a part of that sad past of which we have agreed never to speak—that you have been deprived of your birthright—but it will be given back to you, I am sure.”

And after that long, long day of suspense and terror, Nellie found herself in the evening by Allston Leigh’s side, in the great, oak-beamed hall that, lighted by a soft moon-like lamp swinging by silver chains from the ceiling, stretched in dim vista through the full length of the spacious house.

It was the “pictured hall” of which the dying girl had told in the old Road House. The Randalls of six generations looked down from the pan-

eled walls. Cavaliers, Colonial buds, Revolutionary heroes, prelates and statemen, regal dames in ruffs and farthingales, coquettes with powdered hair and Watteau gowns, and soft-eyed little maids who had vanished behind convent grilles to bring unseen benediction on their race and name. And the girl who sat here, with the lamp-light falling on her delicate face, her red-gold hair, seemed, in Allston Leigh's eyes, a fitting addition to this stately line. She wore one of her daintiest gowns to-night; a soft white crepe that fell in the graceful folds that only a French *modiste* can accomplish.

"You look as if you ought to be put in a frame and hung up with the rest," the gentleman said, as he sank on the carved "settle" beside her.

"I wouldn't stay there," she answered. "I can't imagine anything more dreadful than staring down for hundreds of years at a world you have left behind."

"It must be somewhat monotonous, I confess," he laughed. "Still, they make a goodly company, these old Randalls. Have you been introduced to them all yet?"

"No," she answered, "and I don't think I want to be. Most of them look very cross."

"I suppose most of them do. They lived in sterner times than ours, you see, Miss Nellie, and perhaps were made of sterner stuff. That gentleman to the right there had to choose between giving up his Faith or his head, and he went to the block without hesitation; that dark-eyed cavalier beside him died in the Tower for loyalty to his exiled King; that pale-faced saint above was the Father John Randall hanged at Tyburn. And there to the left is Sir Roger—the sturdy gentleman who gave up title and lands to plant his race in these far shores to which they brought the ancient Faith.

"Even the ladies had their own hard times. Mistress Dorothy Randall, there, it is said, held this very house two days and two nights against the Indians, until her lord, who was down at St. Mary's, came back to the rescue. And there is a pretty story of that Elinor Randall in the corner, your namesake, I believe, who rowed across the river with only a faithful slave at midnight to carry a dispatch to General Washington's courier on the opposite shore—the young lady's lover who bore it having unwisely stopped at Rosecrofte and been captured by the enemy.

"It is all a goodly record, you see, of noble

women and brave men, Miss Nellie, a record of which the Randalls are justly proud."

"Yes," she answered, "I know. And I wonder, if something or somebody happened to strike at that dreadful pride, what the Randalls would do."

"Fight it out to the death," was his light answer. "Since I am in the family history line to-night, I can tell you a story about that, too. You see that tall gentleman to your left, with the fair hair and blue eyes?"

"Yes," she answered, lifting her gaze to the handsome portrait, "he looks different from the rest."

"He was. That is your great-uncle, Martin Randall, the judge's younger brother. Aunt Van—he belonged to her generation—knew him well. He was not like the others at all. He had not the stiff Randall backbone, but was quite a gentle, quiet fellow, one of the men who see visions and dream dreams. He was an artist, too, which was another departure from family precedent, all the Randalls having been either soldiers, statesmen, or saints. And this new trade proved his undoing, for he fell in love with a pretty girl in some out-of-the-way place where he had gone to paint wild scenery—and was broken up forever."

"Why?" she asked, quietly.

"Why, indeed?" he echoed, laughing. "You have a way of putting questions that is most upsetting to social standards. Why, indeed? Should not a free American love and marry as he will? Because—because tradition, precedent, family pride, all sorts of stern unrealities forbid. In this case the girl was quite impossible. Her father was a tavern keeper in the mountains, her mother even was a gypsy—so the story goes. Though the girl had been sent to school and educated beyond her class, the combination was unthinkable. Yet poor Martin Randall's head was so turned that he was ready to throw the Randall pride to the winds and marry the girl offhand, when your grandfather broke things up."

"Grandfather! Grandfather!" repeated Mr. Leigh's listener, breathlessly, a sudden memory bringing startled color to her cheek. "How?"

"As the strong can control the weak," was the answer. "Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately in this case, your great-uncle was weak. And when the family batteries, with the accumulated ammunition of five hundred years, were brought to bear upon his summer love dream, it could not withstand the shock. But something must have gone

down with it, for love and life slipped from the poor fellow almost together. He went into a rapid decline and died the following year in Italy, whither he had gone to find health. Your grandfather and grandmother were with him, and Mrs. Randall told Aunt Van that the last word on poor Martin's lips was Rachel Varney's name."

Rachel Varney! Rachel Varney!

Allston Leigh went on lightly with his family story, but his listener heard nothing more. She was back again in the dusky gloom of the Road House, a harsh old voice croaking in her ear. "He stood between me and my spring sunshine. It was my one glint of light in fifty years of darkness and I can not forget—I can not forget."

No! Rachel Varney could not forget. For it was her granddaughter who sat in the proud home that had been closed against Martin Randall's love, listening to her story. It was her granddaughter who held the place she had been denied fifty years ago, it was Rachel Varney's granddaughter whom she had forced upon the proud Randalls of Rosecrofte as their own. Truly the croaking old mistress of the Road House had found her revenge.

"I don't think you like family history," Allston

Leigh was saying, when she at last caught his words.

"No, I don't," she answered, slowly. "It seems like the opening of graves. And Martin Randall was a fool and a coward!" she added passionately.

"Oh, don't be too hard on your great-uncle, Miss Nellie," was the light answer. "He was confronted by the impossible. Can you imagine Rachel Varney *here*?"

"Yes, Mr. Leigh, I can."

"Oh, you are a hopeless little Anarchist," he laughed. "But a year at Rosecroft will convert you. You will be as proud a Randall as ever bore the name. Aunt Van assures me you have an 'air' of the old *noblesse*—even beyond the Randall stamp. So you see," he added, gaily, "you can not escape your fate."

"I can not escape my fate," she repeated his words slowly, almost drearily. "I believe that is true, Mr. Leigh. I can not escape my fate." Then there was a call to supper and the conversation was over.

But far into the night, Rachel Varney's granddaughter sat by her open window, wide-eyed and restless, Allston Leigh's words echoing and re-echoing in her troubled brain.

Stunned, dazed, dazzled, she had wakened into her new life so gently, so quietly, that she had not seen the perils among which she must walk, the dangers that would threaten her way. The past day had been a revelation to her—a sudden shock waking her from her dream of peace and rest.

A glance, a word, a meeting with the strange preacher and all would have been over for her. Love and tenderness would have turned into horror and contempt. Rachel Varney's granddaughter would have been turned out from the proud Randall home, shamed and disgraced, as the criminal, the impostor, the living lie that she was.

Ah, the watcher by the window was beginning to see—she was beginning to see! And as the lurid light of danger flashed up on her broadening horizon, something fierce and wild and reckless in Barbara Graeme's blood flamed up in defiant response. She would dare it all—she would hold her vantage ground until the last—she would fight it out (Allston Leigh had given her the word)—fight it out to the death.

CHAPTER XI

"UNDINE "

AND with this fierce resolve burning in her young heart Barbara Graeme went to Mount Merci next day to learn sweet lessons of Light and Truth from the gentle Sisters. It was vacation time, and the convent, usually thrilling with joyous young life, was calm and still, but Judge Randall was an old friend, and the Sisters welcomed this little summer pupil, whose strange story they had heard with tender interest. She was to drive over every morning, it was agreed, for the lessons these wise teachers should find she needed most. She came for a while regularly enough. If the bare, spotless rooms, the veiled forms, the still, tranquil life of the convent were a revelation to her, the summer pupil was no less a startling surprise to the good Sisters themselves. For "Nellie" had learned "lessons" after a fashion of her own before.

In the old days when "no one would play with her" the lonely little girl of the Road House had turned to the dusty books in the garret for enter-

tainment. The "pale wraith of a mother" whom the fierce old grandmother had scorned, had been of gentle blood, and had brought relics of her own orphaned home to furnish the wild mountain nest of the Graemes—among them the treasures of an old-time library.

Little Sister Agatha, who had guided many a girlish band triumphantly through the safe paths of expurgated literature, stood appalled at the wide and reckless sweep of Nellie's reading. All the lore and poetry and fable that filled the shelves of her grandfather's library had been hungrily devoured by the little starveling of the Road House. After a week's experience with her new pupil Sister Agatha came to Sister Celestia in hopeless perplexity.

"I really don't know what to do with that strange girl, Sister. She has read everything—she believes nothing. It is like groping in darkness to reach her mind or heart."

"It is," said Sister Celestia, "but I have learned to grope in darkness, Agatha. Send her to me——"

And so it came about that other lessons were dropped, and every morning found Nellie in the quiet room, where flowers brought by loving hands

to the dear blind nun bloomed all the week around, filling the air with their fragrance, and Sister Celestia sat in the vine-wreathed window, some soft knitting in her slender hands and "talked."

Such talks as they were, and *true*—vividly and delightfully true. For Sister Celestia had not always been a nun. She could tell of a youth in the gay world, of bright journeys in foreign lands, of Italy, France, even far-off Russia, where her father had held a high official position. She had met heroes, statesmen, authors. She had been received at the Vatican, presented at court. And Nellie listened with eager, breathless interest, unconscious that she was learning conventions, traditions, courtly usages, that she was hearing of men and women it was fitting a Randall of Rosecroft should know. Then Sister Celestia would talk of the books she had read in those young days, and new light seemed to flash upon the dusty tomes in the old attic. Memory kindled and quickened—Nellie began to talk of books, too. In a little while she was reading the old favorites to Sister Celestia—discussing their beauties, their faults. But through all this, the clear insight of the blind nun was conscious of some shadow on the young mind

she could not penetrate, some shrinking of the young soul from her touch and reach.

In the one hour of religious instruction every day this was especially apparent. Nellie was docile, distracted, defiant in turn—now accepting, now disputing, the good nun's teaching.

"Oh, I can not believe all this!" she broke out, passionately one day. "I will not. I would rather go on—on—on without any Faith, or Hope. I would rather go on in the dark to the end—to the end."

"Nellie, child, Nellie!" said Sister Celestia, reproachfully. "And what will that end be?"

"Rest," the girl answered, "rest and peace."

"No, my child," and the speaker's usually gentle tone was grave, almost stern. "After death comes judgment, Nellie. Can you face that judgment without fear?"

"Why do you talk like this to me? My life is my own—my own," said the girl, passionately. "I will live it as I please. I can not come into your laws, your rules. I can not—I can not."

"Nellie, my poor little child, what secret is your heart hiding?" asked Sister Celestia, and the sightless eyes were fixed upon the girl's face as if they could read into the depths of her soul. "You are

holding to the darkness because you dread the day. Your life is not your own, child, it belongs to God, who, whatever your past darkness, is now giving you the light—calling you by every tender, blessed influence. Oh, Nellie, dear child, I tremble for you, for if you mock and reject this Light it will flame into fiercer power. I feel," and the low voice grew strangely thrilling, "I feel that you will be saved so as by fire, my poor child, so as by fire."

"You are saying dreadful things to me to-day," Nellie answered, with the hard little laugh that always warned Sister Celestia her pupil's mood was hopeless. "And I am a brand for the burning, I suppose, as the camp-meeting preacher told me when I laughed at his mourners six years ago. But I—I can't change," the words came in an odd, despairing gasp. "I can't be anything but the wild heathen thing I am, Sister. And so—so—I am going home."

And she went, to come to Mount Merci no more. The drive was too long, she told Judge Randall and the weather too warm. And gentle Sister Celestia could only pray for the child who would have neither light nor guide on her darkened way.

* * * * *

"My dear, dear boy!" standing on her jasmine-

wreathed porch, Madame Van Arsdale lifted her handsome old face for her nephew's kiss. "This is a surprise indeed. I thought you were in San Francisco."

"I was six days ago," answered Mr. Leigh. "But the breath of the jasmine reached me in my dreams and I am here——"

"You best of boys," she said, tapping his cheek with the charming coquetry which never deserts the Southern woman of the old régime. "To come three thousand miles for your old aunt's fête."

"And risk a five thousand fee. But it was the call of the blood and I could not resist. How lovely everything looks," and the young man cast an ardent glance around him, the wide sweep of shaded lawn, the box-bordered garden beds, the sheltering oaks.

"Lovely, yes, Allston, though the west wing is nearly down and half the roof gone. But the jasmine is wreathing the gap and no one will see. It will hold out as long as I, Allston—as long as I do, dear boy."

"Which means, I hope, a jubilee of sweet summer years for both," he said, drawing her to a seat on the rustic bench. "Who are here with you?"

"Oh, quite a crowd already. The Lansons and Bennetts, Cousin Lucy Lester, and Lida Stewart and Billy Wayne. Old Colonel Percival, of course, and Major Lewis. They are all off on a picnic this morning at St. Omer's spring. And there is a boat-load, of course, coming down to-night. They have chartered the *River Queen* and she will wait their return—for the old house stretched to its limit will not hold all."

"I should think not," he said, with a laugh. "How you manage this open house I really can't see."

"Oh, I have two hundred dollars in the bank," she answered carelessly. "And chickens and peaches are plentiful. Uncle Jeff has two cows on the place, you know, and a fair garden this year. And all the old servants are back, Aunt Chloe and Martha, Rebecca with both her girls, and Dick and Pete. You are laughing, Allston. I am an old fool, I know——"

"You are, Aunt Van, and so am I. There is some sort of midsummer madness in our blood. Let us be fools together, and enjoy it. The Rosecrofte crowd are coming, of course?"

"Oh, yes, to-night. I have kept a room for Milly and Nellie. Nellie!" repeated the old lady, whim-

sically. "I wonder why they call the child by that foolish name? It doesn't suit her at all. She ought to be Sara or Judith or Barbara, or something quaint and strong. It is as I told you, Allston. That girl is waking up. I stopped at Rosecrofte for a day last week and saw it plainly."

"Waking up?" he echoed. "How?"

"Oh, every way. Some wild free spirit in her seems breaking loose. You know they sent her to Mount Merci for instructions. My dear, it was like putting an eagle in a dove cote. She shocked the good nuns breathless. Then dear blind Sister Celestia took her in hand, but she broke away even from her gentle hold. Told the Judge that it would drive her mad to think and believe what Sister Celestia taught."

"Ah, there was a scene then, I know!" said the gentleman in breathless interest.

"No," answered Aunt Van, "strange to say, there was not. As Marian says, she never saw any one gain so strong a hold on the Judge's heart. Besides, it seems the doctor had warned him that she would be restless, nervous, hysterical, perhaps, for some time after the shock. He talked the matter over with me, and I advised him to take her abroad. I have written to Paris to Louise Char-

rette. She travels with young girls as governess and chaperone, since her husband's death, and is one of the most cultured, clever women I know. She will be invaluable to Nellie. The child will come back transformed. This wild little offshoot from the family tree will burst into strange bloom, Allston, as you will see."

And Allston Leigh listened to the old dame's prophecy with a strange thrill—half pleasure, half pain. He watched for the "wild little offshoot" that night eagerly.

Though its walls might be tottering, its roof gone, Van Arsdale Manor, arrayed for its yearly fête, was an enchanting scene. There was no need for Japanese lantern or incandescent light, for the moon was at its full, the silvery beams trembling through groves and bowers, dappling the lawns and gardens with wavering shadows, making the river a shimmering roadway to some far unknown.

With the lace shawl that had been the bridal veil of three generations draping her shoulders, and the quaint old Van Arsdale jewels gleaming in her gray brocaded gown, the hostess stood on the wide porch to receive her guests. They came, as Mildred had said, from far and near, by boat and carriage and stageload, for there was not only

social prestige in Madam Van Arsdale's invitation, but honest affection for the cheery old chatelaine brought many to her summer fête. And when at about nine o'clock the *River Queen*, with fluttering pennants and a stringed orchestra playing on its deck, steamed up to the crumbling old wharf, the crowd of gay revellers that stormed Van Arsdale Manor was a tribute indeed to its ante-bellum queen. The Randall party was with the rest—they had boarded the boat from their own wharf twenty miles away. Mildred as "great grandmother" in a quaint costume of a hundred years ago, looked as if she might have stepped out of one of the family portrait frames. But even this belle of long ago was eclipsed by the strange beauty at her side—the "Undine" of the old story, with her red-gold hair falling loose over the shimmering green satin gown, garlanded with trailing grasses and water lilies. It was fully an hour before Allston Leigh, doing his duty bravely to Aunt Van's guests, could escape where his fancy led him, and make his way to this witching water-sprite's side.

The revel was at its height now. Knights and gnomes, princes and peasants, bandits and fairies, peopled the moonlit stretches of lawn and grove,

and lingered on the wide-columned portico. Wax tapers burned in the old sconces and candelabra, the tall old mirrors stretched the scene into endless vistas, old servants went to and fro bearing trays of ices and cooling drinks, the orchestra, stationed now on the western terrace, was playing the tunes of long ago. And the breath of the jasmine was through it all, the jasmine that in its starry bloom seemed to hold all the sweetness of the dead past.

It was a night for dreams, and Allston Leigh yielded to its enchantment when he found himself at last leaning on the stone terrace at "Undine's" side. He had led her away from Aunt Van, who had been introducing this new "bud" into the innermost circles of the old *noblesse* with pardonable pride.

There had been a fountain on the terrace in the days of the Van Arsdale grandeur and a tiny stream still trickled musically through the weeds and grasses. When "Undine" seated herself a little wearily on the broken rim of the basin the picture was complete.

"You are perfect," he said. "How did you manage it?"

"The dress?" she said. "Lottie made it out of one of Milly's ball-gowns. And I gathered the

weeds and water lilies down by the creek this morning. They will wither, of course, but it is only for a night. Undine will be gone forever to-morrow."

"To-morrow! I hate the word," he said. "To-morrow always means dull, hard prose. Don't let us think of it—to-night. What have you been doing in the ages since I saw you?"

"The ages?" she echoed, with a laugh.

"Yes. It has seemed about six centuries since we sat in the picture hall of Rosecroft and I told you family stories you did not like."

"I remember," she answered, quietly.

"Of course you do. I have an unfortunate facility for doing disagreeable things that people remember. Let us obliterate that memory if we can. Tell me some of the pleasant things that have happened since."

"Pleasant things? Let me see. I have learned to row, to drive, and even to ride a little, Mr. Leigh. Grandfather has given me a gentle horse and a pretty watch. I have been to a dance at the Duvals, and a gypsy tea at the Dixon's and to school at Mount Merci."

"Good!" said Leigh, gaily. "Really one could not ask a more charming record."

"Not so charming as you think. I ran away from the tea and the dance and from the good nuns alike."

"Why?" he asked.

"The tea was too dull and the dance too gay and the nuns— Ah, to think and pray with the good nuns would drive me mad."

It was the soulless little pagan water nymph that seemed to sit there in the moonlight, and Allston felt the chill of her mocking tone.

"Was it as bad as that?" he asked.

"Yes. Or no doubt it is I who am bad beyond help or hope."

"Not bad," he said, "only untaught and astray."

"Astray!" she echoed. "I believe that is the word for it. Did you ever walk in your sleep, Mr. Leigh?"

"Never," he answered.

"I did once when I was a very little girl. Some one had told me of grapes that grew high above the waterfall—that none of the boys even could reach. I dreamed about them and went for them in my sleep."

"Good heavens! Was there no one to watch you?"

"No one," she answered, drearily. "My mother

was dead, and my father—away. How I got to the place I do not know, but when I woke I stood high on the rocks, my arms full of grapes, and the waterfall roaring beneath me. I dared not take a step, I could only cling there, crying for long, long hours until some one passing in the road below heard me and climbed up and took me home. I often feel as if I were walking in my sleep now—and—if I wake—if I wake—but,” her tone changed suddenly, “I will not wake. I mean to dream on forever and ever. Do you know we start for Europe to-morrow, Mr. Leigh?”

“To-morrow?” he echoed. “Not—*not* to-morrow?”

“Yes, to-morrow. Our trunks are packed, and everything is ready. Some friends of grandfather’s had their passage engaged and could not go, so we take their place. We are to stay two years and I am to have a governess—and learn everything. Two years is—is—a long time,” she said, with a little catch in her breath, “a long time.”

“It is an eternity,” he said, excitedly. “Two years! When six weeks away from you seems centuries! When only to spend this one moonlit hour with you I have traveled over a continent. When, when——” he paused. The gray eyes were fixed

upon him with the wide-open question of a startled child. For there was a music in his voice she had heard brokenly, rudely, from poor Daffy's lips in the long ago—a music that seemed ever afterward a part of the enchanted night, blending with the trickle of the waters at her feet, the gleam of the moonlight, the breath of the jasmine—the sweet, full notes of "The Old Kentucky Home"—from the orchestra under the trees.

"I must go," she said, in a half-frightened voice. "Grandfather will be looking for me, Mr. Leigh, for we must go back to Rosecroft to-night. To-night! I will never forget to-night. It seems like a dream in which all things end—all things that have gone before. Aunt Marian says I will come back another girl. So it must be good-by forever to me—to-night."

"Not for me," he answered. "There can be no 'other girl' for me. You will be 'yourself' always and forever. And I will not be banished into outer darkness for two years. Neither oceans nor continents count against your spell, little water witch. May I come?"

"Yes," she answered, softly. "Come."

CHAPTER XII

THE WILD WEED'S BLOOM

THE two years had passed. It was winter, and Allston Leigh's growing practice had drawn him to Washington where "the season," social and political, was at its height.

Committees, conventions, night sessions, contested the field with dinners, dances, functions of every kind, until the gay city seemed to scintillate with electric life, in which the brilliant young lawyer held place with the careless ease of one "to the manner born."

There were more than a dozen invitations claiming his attention this morning as he lingered over a late breakfast at his club.

Dr. John Vance, rapidly gaining name and fame in the University Hospital over which he had been called to preside, and who had pulled Mr. Leigh through a spell of typhoid six months ago, sat opposite him, having dropped in for a cup of the "club" coffee after a trying night.

"If you're going to keep that up," he laughed,

with a glance at the mail. "I'll have you on my hands again, Leigh."

"No danger," was the answer. "Most of these must go into the waste basket with regrets." But his eye suddenly brightened as he picked up an envelope from the heap. The careful elegance of the seal, the faint breath of sandalwood, the slight tremor of the old Italian handwriting, were tenderly familiar to him. He broke open the envelope to read the few lines within.

"I am chaperoning a party to the Embassy Ball to-night. Be sure to look for us.

"ANNETTE VAN ARSDALE."

"The dear old *mondaine*," he said, softly. "She will never give it up, if she lives to wind out her century."

"Aunt Van?" said the doctor, smiling.

He had made the old dame's acquaintance during her nephew's illness. "I'd like to get her anti-toxin for Time, Leigh. In some racket with the other young folks, is she?"

"Yes, she will be down to-night with a crowd to the Embassy Ball. That means work for me, I know. A dozen girls to provide with partners and ices—and Southern girls at that. A Northern girl will accept three dances with complacency, and

spend the rest of the evening in happy wallflowerhood—but for a Southerner to sit out a dance partnerless is tragedy indeed. Vance, you will have to bring over some of your young medicos, and help me out.”

“I can’t promise for the medicos, but I’ll drop in, if possible, myself,” said the doctor, rising. “Miss Mildred told me she would be there and——”

“Ah, she did!” Mr. Leigh lifted his eyebrows significantly. “It seems to me she keeps you pretty well informed as to her whereabouts, Vance. You were at the Rosecrofte house party Christmas and at her dinner dance two weeks ago, and, really, I think I ought to be made a party of the third part and allowed to felicitate. Milly has been like a sister to me, you know, all her life.”

“A sister?” echoed Vance, his face brightening cordially as he leaned over the other’s chair. “Only a sister, Leigh? I am glad to hear that. I was afraid that perhaps—perhaps you were cutting the ground from under me, old chap.”

“Not at all, not at all! Go in and win. Frankly, I could not wish either of you better luck.”

“Thanks,” said the young doctor, his fine face flushing. “Of course, how I stand I can’t say—

yet—but well— There has been no other woman in the world for me since we met at her cousin's bedside nearly three years ago, at Bixby Creek. It was the hope of being somewhere near her that drew me to Washington."

"Yes, I know something of that sort of magnet," said Leigh, dryly. "It defies all scientific investigation, Vance. I was drawn over to Paris myself about six months ago to find a polar star glittering in a strange sky billions of miles beyond reach."

"Was it the Undine of your fever-dream, Leigh?" asked the other softly.

"Undine! Did I talk about her when I was ill?" asked Leigh.

"The night when you were at your worst," answered the doctor. "I never spoke of it—such things ought to be sacred to a physician, I think. That shadowy passageway between life and death is to me always holy ground. But it was the one thought that seemed clear to you when you were lost to all else, and I wondered a little who—what she was."

"A dream," answered Leigh, with a forced laugh, "only a fever dream, Vance, nothing else."

"Let it go at that, then," said the doctor, as with a kindly, comprehending nod he turned away.

And Allston, lingering listlessly for a few mo-

ments longer over the dainty meal that seemed to have turned into apples of Sodom on his lips, arose too, and flinging a tip to the waiter who helped him on with his great coat, passed out into the bright wintry sunshine, that in this coquettish clime never quite loses its summer smile. The broad streets were already gay with well-dressed crowds. Carriages, automobiles, light, graceful equipages of every sort, were skimming over the smooth asphalt; but there was no roar or rush of traffic, no struggle for passageway, no din or turmoil to tell of the battle of life. The wide squares, green yet despite the advanced season, were filled with pretty children and their nursemaids, that gave an added holiday air to the scene. As he took a short cut through one of these charming opens Leigh came across a band of these little tots dancing gleefully to the music of a street organ that was undoubtedly under generous and unusual pay, while leaning back against one of the stately old trees "bossing" the *al fresco* ballet, was a stalwart young gentleman, who, though dressed in the very latest "cry" of sartorial art, had the unmistakable "rustic woodland air" of Wordsworth's immortal heroine.

"Don't stop, dago—give us another quarter's

worth. That's right, kids—keep it up. I can stand it as long as you can; it's a dum sight better than that disrespectful high kicking I paid three dollars for last night. Why, Judge!" the speaker turned two honest, astonished eyes on Mr. Leigh, and held out a broad, horny hand. "Good morning, good morning! You see I'm taking it gay and easy here—like the rest."

"So it seems," said Mr. Leigh, recognizing with a cordiality not entirely professional, one of his most remunerative clients. "Fortunately for us both, you have every reason to take it easy, Mr. Mills."

"I have, Judge, I have, thanks to you," was the emphatic answer. "If I hadn't had the goldarn good luck to put my business in your hands, them air confounded shysters would have smashed me and my machine finer than my Graystone Grinder can smash stone. But we did them up, didn't we? We came and fit, and conquered, as the school-books used to read, though I ain't much on school-books, I must say. I once turned a pretty gal dead agin me by talking school-books to her instead of plain nat'rel common sense. Yes, we made a good thing of it, you and me, Judge—a good thing. The way the money is piling in fur that Graystone

Grinder, I don't feel as if you had been paid enough."

"Oh, quite enough, Mr. Mills. My fee was all I could ask—a bargain is a bargain, you know."

"Land, I hev'n't kept store at a cross-roads ten years without larning that," answered Mr. Mills, showing his fine white teeth in a friendly smile. "But this here's different, Judge. This here business you did fur me tuk brains and book-larning. I'm close at a bargain as anybody you'd find in a day's hunt, as every one that knows Daffy Mills will say, but I've got the double-headed gold end of this business, I kin see. I'd like to make you out a check for another five thousand, Judge."

"Thank you," said Leigh, laughing. "That is real appreciation, I know, Mills; but I've had my fee, and that's enough. Luckily, I don't need to fleece my clients. Money coming in too fast for you, eh?"

"Oh, I ain't complaining of that," answered Daffy, with his genial smile. "I know how to salt it down to keep, Judge. I just want to do the fair thing all round."

"You've done it," said Leigh, cordially, "and you will continue to do it, I am sure. So salt the rest down, my friend. There will be a Mrs. Mills,

no doubt, some of these days, and kids of your own to pay the piper for."

"I dunno 'bout that, Judge," was the answer, and a shadow fell on the speaker's smiling face. "When you've lost the one girl you've cared for, like I did, somehow you don't hanker after double harness."

"You've been through that, eh?" said Leigh, a note of new sympathy in his voice. They had turned away from the dancing children, and were walking slowly down a path trimly bordered with evergreens.

"Yes, I've been through it, Judge—or I can't say that neither. Seems as if I couldn't never get through it and come out clar the other side. Lord, if she were only here to get some of this loose cash! I wouldn't ask nothing from her that she didn't want to give—not a look, nor a smile, nor a promise. I'd just let her take everything she wanted and be happy. For she, this poor little girl of mine, never had nothing, Judge, nothing. Father doing a life term in State's prison, mother dead of a broken heart, grandmother as fierce an old catamount as ever had its claws in a young critter, half-clothed, half-starved. That's the way poor little Weasel had it from the time she was knee-high.

But Lord, she was grit—grit straight through. Stood up to her hard luck like a man."

"And she died, you say?"

"Yes—she—died. It was worse than that, Judge, She was killed."

"Great heaven!" exclaimed Leigh, in a shocked tone. "There don't talk any more about it, Mills. It's too—too—tough on you."

"I can't talk about it, somehow, Judge," Daffy seemed to swallow a big lump in his throat. "It was one of the—railroad wrecks," the speaker's adjectives were too forcible to repeat, "that some one ought to hang for. Poor little Weasel was just born for hard luck straight through. No, I can't talk about it much, Judge—only you can see now why I am not hankering after any Mrs. Mills—just—just yet."

"Yes, I can see," answered Leigh, gently. "I can see, and I am glad you told me this, Mills." The speaker's voice had the deep music in it that won and held his friends. "I would rather have had this morning's confidence than any check you could sign. Will you be in Washington long?"

"I can't say, Judge," was the hesitating answer. "The fact is, I am sort of hanging round on a fool's errand, I guess. That poor little girl's father is

pretty low down, and for her sake, Judge, knowing she'd ask it if she were here, I'd like him to die free. He wasn't a bad lot at all—just fiery and quick, I've heard, and, like Weasel, didn't have no chance. I am trying to work things with our Congressman for a pardon. Our Governor won't meddle. You see they draw guns pretty quick out our way, and he says if he begun to let down the bars, they would draw them quicker. So I've come to headquarters."

"Good," said Leigh, cordially. "It's not in my line, but if I can help you any, Mills, call on me at my office." And shaking hands as they reached the end of the square the two men parted.

Perhaps it was the pain, the restless yearning, the stifled hope in his own heart that made his client's story haunt Allston Leigh so persistently. Such a poor, pitiful, painful little story as it was, without any touch of grace or charm except the simple love glowing through the humble pathos, a love that neither poverty nor disgrace nor even death could dim. A convict's daughter! Of course, such things did not count in the same way in the far West, still Mr. Allston Leigh's high-born, high-bred instincts recoiled.

Perhaps he found himself coldly reflecting that

it was just as well for Mills, good, honest fellow, that this undesirable inamorata had been removed from his upward way. And with this conclusion, Mr. Leigh shook off the softening touch of Daffy's humble romance that night, and proceeded to the Embassy Ball.

It was to be one of the most brilliant functions of this brilliant season, he knew, the regal atmosphere, diffused by centuries of stately precedent met the guests at the wide open doors, where lackeys glittering in royal liveries stood on guard, and the great hall and staircase blazed with color and crest on a background of tropic bloom. Through the gorgeous rooms, with their rich draperies and glancing mirrors and coruscating lights, surged a tide of life at its most sparkling, dazzling height. There was a glitter of brilliant uniforms and court costumes, the blaze of jewelled stars and orders, the flash of diamonds on snowy throats, the shimmer of splendid gowns, all that tells of human pride and power and beauty in its most triumphant hour.

Accustomed as he was to such scenes, Allston Leigh was conscious of an unusual thrill to-night as he was caught on the sweep of this dazzling wave of life and borne forward. Bright smiles and

glances, gracious words, friendly greetings, met him on every side. Here on the high tide the brilliant young barrister had already made for himself name and place.

After due greeting to his hostess he felt it behooved him to remember Aunt Van's mandate and "look out" for her and her pretty flock—for Aunt Van never chaperoned anything else. The matches this charming old *mondaine* had made during her forty odd years of matronly maneuvering would have filled a modest marriage register, but she knew her limitations. "Blood or beauty, my dears! I don't undertake any girl without them. Personally, I like clever women, but, as we all know, men don't."

And with philosophic submission to the inevitable, Mr. Leigh passed on into the great ball-room, prepared to do his duty to Aunt Van's protégées at any cost. The dance was on, the wide stretch of polished floor was a kaleidoscopic whirl of light and life and color that pulsed in rhythmic waves to the thrilling music of a stringed band. As Leigh skirted the swaying crowd looking out for the chaperones enthroned in palm bowers on either side, he became conscious of an eddy in this brilliant sea. Its glittering wave-crest seemed

swaying, breaking, about a deep embrasured window, where some supreme queen of this gay hour was holding court.

"Wonderfully lovely, isn't she? An odd kind of beauty. And that gown is Parisian perfection."

"Her picture was in the salon last year, you know. And they say the Duc de Lausanne is at her feet."

Leigh started forward with quick-drawn breath at the words.

There in the palm-shaded recess, with the imperial arms wrought in flowers above her, stood Aunt Van, her gray hair piled high upon her stately old head, the Van Arsdale diamonds gleaming upon her rich lace draperies, a fine old dowager that would honor any court.

But this granddame of another generation paled into a mere shadow of the past in the light of the radiant vision at her side. A girl whose aureole of red-gold hair seemed to fling its own glory upon the delicate, ethereal beauty of her face, the sea-shell bloom of her cheek, the wonderful eyes that changed from light to shadow like the water under wind-swept clouds.

Her gown, of some silvery, gauzy fabric, floated round her like an opalescent mist, its only orna-

ment one flashing diamond star. A cluster of orchids swung by a pale-green ribbon to her wrist, and trailing down the shimmering folds of her dress, seemed to hold her to earth, so light and graceful was her airy poise.

All round her men were pressing forward for the word, the glance, the sparkling, gracious smile, which she scattered lightly as the waterfall scatters its foam-spray, while she chatted in charming French with the much be-starred diplomat at her side. The two years had done their work. The "wild weed" of Rosecrofte was in full and perfect bloom.

CHAPTER XIII

UNDER THE PALMS

LEIGH stood dumb, transfixed for a moment, the blood surging wildly through heart and brain at the vision before him. He had believed her thousands of miles away, this girl whom no denial, no mockery, not even the claim of a royal suitor, could banish from his thoughts and dreams.

"Allston, my dear boy!" Aunt Van's delighted voice aroused him. "I thought you had failed us. I have a lovely crowd with me to-night—Ethel Ross and Janet Howard and Marjorie Rives. And Nellie! Ah, you are astonished to see her, I know. She flashed home upon us like a meteor only last night."

And then the wonderful gray eyes met his—arch, winsome, compelling, and he made his way somehow to her side.

"Ah, Mr. Leigh—this is our dance, I believe," and he caught at her graceful strategy gladly and led her off into the brilliant whirl. "Just one turn around the room to escape Colonel Dupré and the rest," she laughed up at him. "You hate dancing,

I know. There is a little nook behind those palms to which you can take me, and we can quarrel comfortably."

"If such be your pleasure," he answered, as they reached the hedge of feathery green that hid a deep, cushioned window seat.

"Have you not a word of welcome for me?" she asked, as she sat down, as if a little weary, in the shelter of the palms.

"I have no words at all to express my surprise," he began.

"And delight, as well, I hope?" she added, mockingly.

"What has brought you home?" he asked, ignoring her light speech. "I thought—" he paused.

"That I was abroad indefinitely," she said.

"No, most definitely and determinedly. So I judged at our last meeting."

"Well, you were mistaken. You are really not infallible, Mr. Leigh. We are home now, definitely and determinedly."

"For how long?" he asked, in a low tense tone.

"Really, that I can not say. I begin to think if things keep up like this I shall like home better than I supposed."

"When are you to be married?" he asked, grimly.

"When am I to be married?" she repeated, with a laugh. "For a man without words it seems to me you are a little catechetical, Mr. Leigh."

"I am—unpardonably so," he answered in a graver tone.

"Not at all—you have the privilege of old acquaintance. Any one who tolerated me during my first months at Rosecroft has established a claim on me which nothing can shake. And you were one of my earliest instructors, Mr. Leigh. Don't move, or we are lost. I see a glittering young *attaché* who is looking for me for the next dance, and I am so tired." She leaned back on her cushions with a little fluttering sigh, and as the light from an electric bulb fell upon her uplifted face, Leigh noted the shadows under the eyes, the weary lines about the delicate lips.

"Why do you keep this thing up?" he said, almost roughly. "You are not strong enough for it. It is the pace that kills."

"It must kill then," she answered lightly. "I must live in the foam, in the sparkle of things, or not live at all. You are wondering why I came home so suddenly. Grandfather had one of his

attacks and it frightened me. I felt that we ought to return at once."

"And the Duke? I beg pardon—in my interest I forget——"

"The Duke!" she repeated. "I left the Duke behind with the blue blood of his ten generations aboil. We had a quarrel in the most charming French—there is such *verve*, such vivacity in a French quarrel and the Duke was so dramatic."

"Do you mean you have thrown him over?" Leigh asked, breathlessly.

"Oh, really, no; nothing so vigorous as that, Mr. Leigh," she laughed. "I assure you it was a most graceful adieu."

"Thank God," he said, under his breath. "You didn't care a jot for him, I know."

"Ah, there you mistake. I esteemed him and his ten generations most highly, Mr. Leigh. And, as my dear Madame Charrette assured me, beyond that no discreet *jeune fille* should go. And for a while, as you will testify from our meeting at Biarritz last year, I was most discreet. But, but—perhaps it was the Duke's nose! It is most highly Roman and patrician, as Madame Charrette said, but there is so much of it. There came a time,

when the Duke seemed all nose. And then we visited the château of his ancestors. There were black dungeons in it where people had died, chained to the walls, and an *oubliette* whose dreadful secrets no one ever knew—all most high-born and aristocratic, of course, as Madame Charrette assured me—and a chapel where all the ten generations are lying in state, their stone hands clasped in prayer—Marie, Mélanie, Jacqueline, Camille, second, third, fourth, fifth Duchesses of Lausanne. Ah, the line was unending, I thought—until I came to the nice cold white slab waiting blank for Maurice Francis, eleventh Duke of Lausanne and his wife. It was too much. The long chain of the generations seemed winding about my neck, and I snapped it and was free. Then even dear Madame Charrette gave me up. I was beyond her understanding, she declared! Never would she take one of these *Americaines incompréhensibles* to her governess' heart again. So we parted, and I went to Italy with the Frascalis while grandfather took the baths at *Les Eaux Chaudes*. Three wonderful months I spent in Italy," the light tone deepened and softened, "and then grandfather joined me and grew worse, as I said, and we are home. Now I have talked myself out, monsieur. It is your

turn. What has happened since you left me on the rocks at Biarritz last summer?"

"I have lived, as you see."

"Lived and flourished," she laughed. "Aunt Van tells me wonderful stories of your brilliant success."

"I have had several big cases and the good luck to win them," he answered. "But success—I would not give my record that name. There are more interesting happenings in your own family, I think."

"Milly's pretty romance with her young doctor, you mean? I confess it rather took my breath."

"Why?" he asked, bluntly.

"Aunt Marian is sighing over it, I assure you. She says Milly should do better."

"Impossible," was the quick reply. "No finer, nobler fellow than Jack Vance walks the earth."

"Still there are other things to be considered for a Randall," and there seemed an odd, mocking ring in the silvery tone. "I think you once told me a family story to that effect, Mr. Leigh. Something about a girl named Rachael Varney, whose young heart and hopes were crushed under the Randall pride in some dim, archaic past. It was

my first lesson on sociology and I have always remembered it."

"If you mean that Vance can boast no family tree—" Leigh began.

"None, Aunt Marian declares mournfully," the gray eyes were dancing mirthfully as they met his gaze. "Not even a beanstalk, Mr. Leigh."

"A fig for family trees," was the impatient answer. "The love that would stop at such trifles isn't worth the winning."

"That was not the lesson you taught me two years ago, Mr. Leigh."

"It is my lesson to-night," he answered, "but you are past my teaching now."

"Not at all," she said. "I find this new viewpoint of yours most interesting. Let me understand it. You say that love—true love——"

"Is the law," he answered, with passionate earnestness, as all the mingled influences of the past day—Vance's quiet words of love, Daffy's humble story, the laughing, mocking beauty of the girl before him, stirred him into fiery speech. "The supreme law, overruling pride, prejudice, poverty, all petty distinctions of rank, name, and place. It should lift its own, if need be, from the deepest mire, hold to its own, heedless of the world's

scorn or plaudits through Life and beyond Death."

There was a moment's silence, broken only by the plaintive strains of the German waltz music. Then the gray eyes that had been lifted to the speaker in laughing defiance shadowed, softened, and fell beneath Leigh's gaze.

"Would this lesson be beyond your learning?" he asked, his voice trembling despite himself.

She lifted her eyes again, and for a moment their gaze was clear, steady, searching, a glance from soul to soul.

"No," she answered, "for I am a woman. But I think," and she bubbled once more with light and laughter, "I think, like dear Madame Charrette with her English grammar, you are teaching what it would be quite impossible for you to learn, Mr. Leigh. And now I can hide away no longer. I have missed two partners already I am sure, and you are not doing your *devoir* to Aunt Van's pretty buds at all. Come, we must appear again."

And in a moment more she was standing, gay and gracious, under the electric light, the center of every eye, eager partners pressing around her, and the "lesson" of the evening seemingly forgotten.

"I did not expect to have Nellie with me," explained Aunt Van, as during a pause in his duties her nephew found himself at the chaperon's side. "She joined us at the last minute. Colonel Dupré, who came over in the steamer with her, sent her an invitation by special messenger this morning. Really, it is scarcely fair to my other girls to have such a belle with me. The men have no eyes for any one else when she is near. If you could overhear them raving over her *beauté du diable*, as old Monsieur Pierfonds calls it."

"Confound his French insolence," said Leigh, fiercely.

"Nonsense, my dear boy—he meant only sincere flattery, I assure you. And there is an eerie charm about her, you must agree. Then she has had such wonderful advantages this last two years. Louise Charrette, whom I recommended to the Judge for her governess and traveling companion is incomparable. Nellie shows the training of *la vielle Parisienne* at every turn."

"Was she a good woman?" asked the young man, bluntly.

"Louise Charrette good! My dear Allston, what a question! She is quite a devotee. But there she

seems to have failed. Nellie is still out of the Church."

"So I understand."

"It seems very sad and strange," continued the old lady, "but as her grandfather says, these things can not be forced, and even in this stubborn resistance he can see no fault. He simply idolizes her. She goes to church regularly with him; attends lectures, sermons, even missions, at his request. And she was in the very heart of things, of course, at the Frascalis, I understand. The old Cardinal, their uncle, was most interested in her. But all in vain. She either can not or will not believe. Perhaps this rumored marriage with the Duc de Lausanne will change her. You met him, I think, last summer, Allston."

"Yes," was the brief answer.

"It will be a most brilliant *parti* even for her, I understand," said this good matchmaker with interest.

"Really, of that I am no judge," was the dry answer. "He struck me as a rather empty figure-head of a fast-vanishing past."

Something in the words, in the tone, was a sudden, startling revelation to Aunt Van. But she was too wise, too wary, to give sign.

"They are all at Marian's house in Baltimore for the present," she went on. "Gilbert felt his father should be under the care of a specialist—for a while, at least. But the Judge insists that no anxiety about him should mar the pleasure of Nellie's home-coming. Marian is to give a reception in her honor next week." And the good dame chattered on in seeming unconsciousness of the light that had flashed upon her. Ah, where were her keen wits, that she had not seen from the first? The fête at Van Arsdale Manor, the trip to Europe last summer, the feverish devotion to his profession, the sudden deadening of all youthful enthusiasm since his return. Her boy, her poor, dear boy, she saw it all!

It was close to another day before the good lady's duties as chaperon were over, and in the old-fashioned Southern hotel which she favored, her pretty charges, after various wise provisions for their comfort and beauty, were comfortably settled for sleep until the next forenoon. Aunt Van never allowed her girls the pace that kills. But in the wide airy room that Mildred and Nellie shared together, a log-fire was blazing cheery welcome when they entered, and both girls had found the evening too exciting in many respects to induce sleep.

Slipping into a silken kimono, Nellie flung half a dozen pillows on the hearth-rug, and nestling there in the cheery warmth and glow, watched the quieter, graver movements of her room-mate with a curious gleam in her eyes.

"It's too late for the Rosary to-night," she said, as Milly twined the amethyst beads around her wrist. "Come, it's all settled, I see it in your face. You and Dr. Vance had it out there among the azaleas to-night. Tell me all about it, Milly. You have promised to marry him."

Milly sank into the low chair before the hearth and the firelight showed the new radiance on her sweet, womanly face.

"Yes," she answered, simply. "I have promised him. It will be a disappointment to mamma, I know—but—I love him, Nellie."

"What a solemn finality you put in the word," was the half-mocking reply. "Did you never love before, Milly?"

"Never!" the sweet voice seemed to thrill with its earnest denial. "I have had girlish fancies, of course, but never anything like this—so strong, so deep, so compelling, Nellie. There seems but one place in the world for me and that is at his side, one life for me and that is a share in his, one name

for me—his wife. I have no doubt, no fear. The one shadow that loomed between us is removed. He believes, he hopes now, even as I do.”

“Since when?” was the startled query.

“For more than a year,” Milly answered. “But he did not tell me until to-night under the azaleas. He was almost afraid, he said, that I would doubt his motives—the earnestness, the purity of his faith. As if I could—as if I could! Though, as he said, it was a few words of mine that made him think, that stole like a faint light into his darkness. And then, with that little light glimmering before him, he met Father Lane, the missionary. I don’t suppose you remember him, Nellie. He preached for us once or twice at St. Barnabas.”

“Yes, I—I remember him,” was the low answer.

“There was a terrible fever epidemic in Jack’s town that year, and he and Father Lane met constantly at sick-beds, death-beds, in the slums, the hospitals. Wherever there was direst need, they stood together, Jack fighting for the body and Father Lane for the soul. And such brave fighting as it was. Jack said he sometimes gave in under the strain but Father Lane never.

“The fever raged in the very lowest part of the city, among criminals, outcasts, negroes—the dregs

of the place. But there was no spot too foul or dangerous for Father Lane to enter, no creature too vile, too abandoned, for his message of hope and love. And in the burning light of this charity, Jack saw the Truth and followed it. He is silent about it usually, for it seems too holy, too wonderful an experience for casual speech, but he was received into the Church by Father Lane six months ago. Oh, Nellie, you can not understand how happy this has made me, you can not understand."

"No," was the low, dreary answer, as with her hands clasped over her head Nellie looked into the leaping fire. "No, I suppose I can not understand."

"But some day you will," Mildred went on, softly, "some day the Light will shine for you, dear, as it did for Jack. We are all praying for it—Sister Celestia and all."

"Oh, no, no, no!" was the impassioned cry, and the crouching figure before the fire started up suddenly and falling on her knees buried her head on Mildred's breast. "Don't, don't pray for me—don't let her pray. For it is as she said years ago—the Light for me must be fire, Milly—burning, revenging, consuming fire. Don't pray for it, lest you be heard, lest you be heard."

"Nellie, Nellie, dear Nellie!" cried the other in

dismay, as she clasped the sobbing, trembling girl in her soft tender arms, "what a strange, wild way to think, to feel."

"I know. I am a strange, wild, wicked girl, Milly," the speaker lifted her head again and tossed back the loosened red-gold hair from her strained face. "But I am not so wild and strange and wicked that I can not be glad you are happy, Milly—glad, glad, glad! And, oh, don't mind any one being disappointed. Don't care whether he is rich or poor or high or low, let the world laugh or frown as it pleases. Love like yours is enough—enough to make heaven on earth, Milly, heaven on earth!"

"And you brought it to me," said Milly, as with tender touch she smoothed back the loosened hair from Nellie's face. "I can never forget that. If it had not been for you, we would never have known each other. It was at your bedside we met. He called us to you, you remember."

"Yes, I remember," the speaker's voice grew cold and dull again, "I remember. But we will both look like witches to-morrow if we sit up here talking any longer. *Dix heures de sommeil* Madame Charrette assured me was the first commandment of a pretty woman. Let us to bed and to sleep."

But long after the new betrothed was lost in happy love dreams the gray eyes of her companion stared into the fire-lit shadows about her.

Finally, as if tortured by restlessness, she rose to look at the clock on the mantel. The wide hearth was a bed of embers, blaze and sparkle had died—all was clear fiery glow. And as she stood looking at it—the triumphant beauty of the evening—she seemed to feel a scorching breath within her inmost being.

“It will come,” she whispered to herself, “it has come—already. My God, my God!” she flung herself upon her knees and buried her face in the cushioned chair before her. “Oh, if, like Milly’s happy lover, I dared, dared follow the Light that is burning within my very soul—if I dared—if I dared!”

CHAPTER XIV

THE GLITTER AND THE "GAIN"

SEATED in the heavily curtained window of his son's library, Judge Randall was looking out at the winter storm. It had been snowing all day long, softly, steadily, silently, and now the tall gray houses across the street had taken on fairy pinnacles and battlements, the sharp iron railings seemed hedgerows of May day bloom, while high above all, the towers and dome of the old cathedral rose white-crowned against the leaden sky.

But no such softened wintry touch had fallen upon the old man seated by the window. The Judge was failing sorely, as his best friends agreed. Yet he was making his last fight bravely. The sunken eyes were keen and clear, the thin, worn face had lost nothing of its dignity; though he used a cane now he still held himself erect and proud as of old.

"I am undermined, the doctors tell me, Gilbert," he was saying to his son, "but I can stand for years yet, they say, for a round decade of years yet. I'd

like to see my little girl settled in life before I go. You and Marian will be good to her, I am sure, and I will leave her plenty, but for all that, I feel anxious about her, Gilbert—she is not like Milly, not like any Randall, I ever knew. With all I do and have done for her, I don't think she is happy, Gilbert."

"Not happy!" echoed the other, in amazement. "Not happy! My dear sir, to me she seems absolutely radiant."

"Glitter, my boy, only glitter! There's no real light or joy in it. It's the rainbow spray of the waterfall, I fear, with the little stream breaking fiercely against the rocks beneath. This marriage with de Lausanne for instance. Of course I didn't want to give her up to a foreigner, though it was what is called a most brilliant match, and for a while she seemed to feel the triumph of it. Then one night, when he had sent her home a casket of beautiful jewels, she flung herself down on her knees at my feet, and begged me to take her away before she sold herself to a man she loathed. And then—then about the Church, she is so strange, so contradictory. I have known her to spend hours before the altar, to attend retreats, sermons, until poor Madame Charrette felt all was right with her,

and suddenly to plunge into a wild round of gayety and seemingly forget there is a God."

"Oh, she will come out all right," said Gilbert, with his good-humored cheerfulness. "I suppose her pretty head is a little turned just now, and I rather think you've spoiled her with over-indulgence. But really, I can't blame you. She is as bewitching a little creature as I ever saw. And I don't think you need worry about settling her," the gentleman added, laughing. "Already she could have her pick of the finest fellows in town. Here she comes now, and surely happy enough to ease all anxiety."

The merry music of bells came gaily to the listeners' ears, a sleigh filled with a pretty, fur-clad load dashed up to the door, and in a moment the wide old house echoed with glad voices and happy laughter, as Mildred, Nellie, Leonie Duval, Allston Leigh, and Dr. Vance came trooping up the wide polished stairs into the fire-lit library. They had all met at the Duval's country home for luncheon and were back in time for the dinner which Mrs. Gilbert Randall was to give to a dozen or more guests to-night. For the Judge had his wish—no anxiety for him had apparently marred the brightness of his little girl's return. The last

month had been a round of hospitable entertainments in her honor. And struggle against it as he might, Allston Leigh was drawn into the circle of her charms. For Madam Van was managing matters; that wise and wary old lady who usually saved her strength and her money during the winter season, had flung prudence to the winds and plunged recklessly into the swim, and Allston was called upon to uphold her. Madam Van had not ruled all her men-folks for half a century to lose her grasp on this last of her line. She must steer him into safe waters before she crossed that dark sea whose beacon lights, to do Aunt Van justice, had always shone for her above all the glitter of earth. Even now in the midst of her unusual dissipation she was attending a triduum at the Cathedral.

"I took Nellie with me last night," she confided to her escort as their cab rolled through the darkened streets to the Randall dinner. "And, oh, Allston, she was shaken, I could see her shaken to the soul! And really I never heard a more powerful sermon. Father Lane held his audience breathless. His text was 'What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' and he fairly scorched us poor worldlings with his fiery eloquence.

"There are lost souls before me now," he said, "souls that have bought the world, its wealth and power, at the price no finite mind can reckon. Souls whose fair seeming is a living lie." Really, Allston, it was terrible. I began to look back into my own misdoings and to thank the Lord the west wing of the Manor was down and I had the safety of the impecunious. And Nellie, as I said, was shaken to the soul. She was trembling like a leaf beside me. I gave a hint of it to Marian and advised her to contrive a meeting with Father Lane. She said she would invite him for to-night."

"My dear Aunt Van, you are the most delightful paradox," said the young man, laughing.

"A paradox! Not at all," answered the old lady, bridling. "The girl ought to be a Catholic, as you know. The Faith is in her blood and in her heart too, as I firmly believe. But she is fighting against it, God only knows why. And I am out in all my old war paint this winter to settle things for both of you, dear boy. It will cost me my August *fête* and a spell of rheumatism, I know, but I'm in the battle, Allston, to convert her, and to marry you. The Duke is out of the way, I understand, but there will be scores of others pressing for his place—for *your* place, Allston."

"*My place!*" he echoed in amazement.

"Yes, yours. If you claim, hold, fight for it, Allston. Oh, she won't be won lightly, I warn you."

"She has no heart to win," was the hard answer. "She told me that plainly last summer at Biarritz when I pleaded with her like the madman that I was. She bewitched me from the first, Aunt Van, drew me across oceans and continents. But she is like the Undine of your fête, she has neither heart nor soul."

"Nonsense," said Aunt Van, sharply. "They may lie too deep down for your seeing, Allston, but if I know women, she has a double share of both."

They reached the Randall home as she spoke, and were ushered into its warmth and light.

The long drawing-room was cheery and home-like, with its soft, shaded lamps and its open fires, and a pleasant company were already gathered, Leonie, Dr. Vance, and some half dozen of the older set. Judge Randall sat in his great armchair by the fire talking to Father Lane, who had just come in, bright-eyed and ruddy, from his brisk walk through the snow. Aunt Van dropped her loose, fur-lined pelerine and fleecy headwrap into

the hands of the maid in the hall and joined the old folks. Allston Leigh, stepping forward to put hat and coat on the antlered rack at the bend of the winding stair, was startled by the sight of the slender, white-robed figure, standing there breathless, hesitant, her eyes fixed on the group visible through the half-parted portières of the drawing room. She turned at his footsteps, her gray eyes blazing with a fire he had never seen before.

"What is that priest doing here?" she asked, fiercely.

"Father Lane?" he asked, in surprise. "He has come to dinner with the rest, I suppose."

"They did not tell me," she said, excitedly. "Why did they not tell me? Why is he here like—like this?"

Leigh looked at her in bewilderment. Her head was thrown back defiantly, her eyes glowing, her slender form quivering. She was like some wild thing at bay. Then suddenly a seeming explanation flashed upon him. Miss Nellie, "shaken to the soul" as she had been the night before, had no mind to meet the preacher who had so painfully impressed her.

"He is here by your aunt's invitation, no doubt,

and I am afraid it is too late to escape him. But you'll find Father Lane quite harmless, I assure you. He only thunders in the pulpit," said Leigh, lightly.

"I have heard him," she said. "And I heard him once before at—at St. Barnabas'."

"I remember," Leigh continued in the same light vein, to soothe her strange excitement. "We went to church together. You were a pale, bewildered little girl taking your first steps in a new world. How you have changed! Almost beyond recognition."

"Beyond recognition!" she repeated, slowly. "You are both flattering and reassuring, Mr. Leigh. Let me see," and she lifted her eyes with the usual laughing light in them to the tall mirror that stood between the antlers of the hat-rack. For a moment she stood facing the reflection, the slender, graceful figure in its rich, sweeping draperies, the red-gold hair dressed high over the delicate, mobile face, the exquisite taste and daintiness of every touch and line of the beautiful picture.

"I am a fool!" she said, and there was a note of triumph in her silvery laugh. "But preachers are my blackest of *bete noirs* and I felt vexed at confronting such a death's head through a charming

dinner. But there is no escape, as you say. Let us go on and face the inevitable."

And lifting the velvet portière she stepped into the drawing-room. The old Judge looked up with tender pride.

"Ah, here she is at last. I was just wondering where you were, little girl. My granddaughter, Elinor, Father Lane." And as the unconscious lie passed the old man's lips, a swift flush she could not control swept over the young beauty's face and the gray eyes fell under the priest's clear, quiet gaze. But only for a moment; then Madame Charrette's pupil recovered all her charming grace and poise, and was at her brightest and best again. Through the pleasant home dinner where Father Lane had been given place at her side, she found topics of mutual interest. Rome, Florence, the ancient palace of the Frascali's where she had been a guest, the old Cardinal who had been a friend of Father Lane's in his student days. Bianca and Francesca, who had been only dark-eyed little romps when he left fifteen years ago, were charming signorinas now. She chatted gayly of them all. But all the while under the light play of their words, there sounded in the girl's soul the surge of deep waters, the grave blessing spoken at the Road

House, the clear warning tone of the preacher at St. Barnabas', the thunder that had echoed from the Cathedral pulpit only last night. Was it the voice of God calling her in ever deepening tone by this man's lips? this man who had stood at Elinor Kent's dying bed, who held so many secrets of the sorrowing, the sinful, buried in his priestly heart?

Did he know? Did he guess? Was he holding her secret with the rest? And when at last, excusing himself on the plea of his nightly sermon, Father Lane took an early leave, Allston Leigh found Nellie in a new mood. She was standing alone in the deep, curtained window in the drawing-room looking out at the storm, all the light and glow of the evening gone from her gray eyes and her voice hard and cold.

"Tired out?" he asked, gently, pushing up a chair for her and dropping on the window-seat beside her. "Considering your aversion for preachers you did nobly. But it was exhausting, no doubt."

"Yes," she answered. "I feel as if I had been climbing a mountain top. And now there is going to be bridge until midnight. I hate bridge. Think of intelligent beings sitting for hours with the whole universe narrowed down to a pack of cards."

"Yet if I remember right you came out a triumphant winner at the Stuarts three nights ago."

"Of course. If I must play anything, I play to win. But it isn't worth the candle. Nothing is to-night."

"Nothing!" he echoed. "Have you reached that point already? You!"

"Oh, it is only for the night, I suppose," she said, with her little hard laugh. "But is the game worth the while, Mr. Leigh? Dressing, dining, dancing, riding the crest of the waves as we do?"

"No, that is not worth while, as I think I told you when we stood on the cliffs of Biarritz last year, and you were dazzled by the glitter and sparkle of a ducal coronet."

"Dazzled!" she repeated. "Do you think I was dazzled? Oh, no! It was the solid anchorage, Mr. Leigh, the anchorage of the ten generations that would hold safe, I knew, though the stars fell. If I only could have stood it! But the chains pulled and I broke loose. And the old château, with the tombstone waiting for me, so solid and sure, and the good duke himself, so dull and slow. I had a letter from Madame Charrette to-day. He is still *desolé*, she declares, and begs me to reconsider my madness."

"Marriage being entirely a matter of cold consideration," he said, bitterly.

"Of cold consideration—yes," she answered.

"And yet Aunt Van, who pretends to know women, declares you have both heart and soul."

"Dear Aunt Van!" the voice grew soft for a moment; "she has been my friend ever since she flung me her sweet-scented old shawl for my enfolding the first day we met. But she does not know me, Mr. Leigh. There is no one in all this wide world who knows me as I am. And that is— shall I call it my pride or my curse? I stand alone, alone— apart—from God and man."

"Not alone," he said, passionately. "Never alone while I live. Reject them as you may, my life, my love will be yours and no other's. My heart, bitter, wounded, aching, is in your hold. I can not break away, I can not."

"Oh, do not say it again—again," she said, in a low pained voice. "It hurts. I have tried to turn you from me."

"You have indeed," he answered.

"Then why do you torture me?" she asked, with sudden impatience. "Have I not told you I must stand alone—apart? And you would want my heart and all its secrets, you would read my soul

and all its needs, you would come into my life as lord and master. And then, then, then," she paused, "Oh, no! If I ever marry it will be on cold consideration, Mr. Leigh."

"Nellie!" something in her tone, her word, had made the dead hope in Leigh's breast start into quivering life again.

"Aunt Van is looking for a partner," she said, and she snatched the hand he had caught, and was gone to join the bridge-players, leaving Leigh dazzled and bewildered. For one moment the mocking, veiling, rainbow spray had parted, and he had caught sight of storm-lashed waves and depths beneath.

Aunt Van was right. He had a fighting chance—and he would take it. All through the night, Nellie's strange words echoed through his mind like a strain of uncomprehended music. She would stand alone—apart. He would read her soul, her heart, be lord and master of her life. Ah, it was that from which she shrank like the free, glad, untamed little creature she was! He must show her how light and sweet would be love's chain, how gentle his rule.

And with these thoughts uppermost in his mind he returned to his Washington office next morning

to find Mr. J. Dafton Mills (as his cards now announced that important gentleman, stretched out with Western ease in his biggest leather chair, awaiting his arrival.

"Well, I'm here, according to your invite, Judge," he said, after they had exchanged cordial morning greetings.

"My invite?" repeated the other. "I'm glad to see so good a client always, Mills, but really I don't remember——"

"Not about Buck Graeme—poor little Weasel's dad?" interrupted Daffy, eagerly. "Him that was put in for a lifer? You said if you could do anything to help me——"

"Oh, yes, yes," and the new hope kindled in his own heart roused Allston Leigh into quick sympathy with this faithful, simple lover. "I remember now—and I'll be as good as my word. What can I do for you, Mills?"

"Well, first thing, Judge, look straight into my eyes for a minute, will you? You don't see anything queer or nutty about me, do you?" Leigh looked into a pair of keen, clear orbs, that he would have trusted to see through any murk or gloom.

"No," he laughed. "I could swear to your being altogether straight, Mills."

"I did think of going to a doctor," said Mr. Mills, thoughtfully, "but not being sure of your Eastern ways I was afeared they might clap me into a sanitarium or water cure, and give somebody charge of my wad. For I've been seeing things, Judge," he added, in a lower tone, "seeing things, sure."

"What sort of things?" asked Leigh, lightly.

"I've been seeing Weasel, Judge!" the words came almost with a gasp.

"Your little sweetheart?" said the "Judge," softly, thinking of the gray eyes haunting him night and day. "Ah, Mills, when a face is graven like hers on a man's deepest heart, one is apt to see it. It is only natural."

"I know that, Judge. But this here ain't natural—it's unnatural. It's the sort of seeing that gives you a cold shaking—like you had the seven days' ague. The fust time was that day I saw you in the park, and talked to you 'bout her. Well, I was coming home from one of the big shows that night, and I passed a house where they were having some kind of a blow-out, and crowds of grand folks were coming out and I got sort of jammed in the push. Sudden I looked up and saw her standing right above me in the doorway all in

shimmering white, Judge, like an angel from the skies. It struck me sick and dizzy for a moment, and when I looked again she was gone. The next time was worse still, Judge. I was in Baltimore. Spellman and Co. had wired me there was some kind of a hitch in their Graystone Grinder, and I went over to look into it. There was a sort of revival at one of the big churches, and I heard it was led by a preacher I knew at home for a A No. 1, so I dropped in to hear him one night. And I seen her again. Just for a moment under one of the stone pillars that were blazing with lights. She was all in black this time and she was pale as the dead."

"A fancied resemblance, my dear Mills," said Leigh, kindly, "nothing more."

"Fancied!" echoed Daffy. "Lord, Judge, do you think I could fancy anything about Weasel? I'd know her agin all the world—know her anywhere—in life or death. No, Judge, I don't believe in spook raisers, but I hev a sort of feeling that Weasel is restless 'bout her poor dad, a-dying there in his prison cell, and is looking to me to help him out. And I'm ready to do it if it takes every cent I've got. Stand by me and you can have the whole darned Graystone Grinder pile."

"My dear Mills, as I told you before, this isn't in my line, and I won't touch a cent from you. But—but there is a face, living or dead, that would haunt my dreams and thoughts, Mills—and—I understand. I'll stand by you as you ask— Bring me the papers you have and I'll do what I can."

CHAPTER XV

THROUGH THE STORM

THE snows lay heavy on Rosecrofte. The wide old house was hooded and mantled in winter ermine—rose bower and trellis and hedgerow white with spotless wreaths and garlands; the lawn stretched a dazzling slope to the blue curve of the river frozen from shore to shore. "So hard a winter," it was declared in the unimpeachable authority of stable and kitchen, "had not been known since befo' de wah." And in the midst and worst of it, the old house, closed and silent for long months, roused into sudden life. Fires blazed in the great rooms, the shuttered windows were flung open to the gray wintry light. Uncle Scip marshalled his domestic force into line. Aunt Dill, dozing over the kitchen hearth, woke into warning and forecast again. "Ole Marster" was coming home after two years of absence. "Ole Marster and Miss Nellie were coming home!" But though it was the restlessness of an invalid that drove the Judge back to the old nest at this uninviting season, it was a cheery homecoming. The note of hos-

pitiable welcome sounded far and near—all up and down the river the great country houses flung open their doors in warm greeting to the returned travelers. The hard winter had brought its unusual pleasures of skating, sleighing, coasting, even the duck-hunters from the city found belated game among the sheltered creeks, where the ice had not closed. Nellie entered into all with a feverish gayety that only added to her charms. Half a dozen suitors were in the lists, and the week end parties at Rosecroft were notable gatherings even in the hospitable record of the house. Aunt Van was a guest for the season. The old dame cheered the judge with extemporaneous sympathy he found nowhere else. Just to see Aunt Van, brisk and bracing under her sixty years, was a tonic in itself. And her recipes for broths and brews and gruels, garnered from three generations of housewives, were treasures beyond modern reach. For the down hill, as well as the uphill of life, Aunt Van still held cheery help and hope. And just now she was head and front of all things, for Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Randall after seeing the Judge comfortably established, had returned to their own house in town.

Milly had gone with them temporarily, but they

would all return for the week's end. Meanwhile Nellie had been carried off this afternoon to the Dixons, ten miles distant, where there was to be an oyster roast to-night, followed by a dance that would have drawn every beau and belle for miles around at any other time. But even the Dixon oyster dance failed to draw. The leadenhued clouds that had been sullenly lowering all day burst into wintry wrath. The few guests that dared its fury dashed up to the door powdered with snow and sleet, breathless with the fight through the driving storm. But there was a house party already gathered in the hospitable old mansion, and the "roast" went on merrily in the old kitchen—the absent musicians were replaced by Bess' piano and her brother Bob's fiddle, while motherly Mrs. Dixon shook down pallets and made up cots, declaring no one should leave the house that night.

Miss Randall had just led the Virginia Reel to a spirited close, and was standing by one of the wide windows looking out at the great trees whose boughs were swaying and writhing in the teeth of the wind, while she listened to young Barker Wallace, the latest victim to her charms.

"The beastliest night you ever saw, Miss Randall. I wouldn't have ventured a step from the door but that I heard you were here. Horse fell three times coming from the station, but I said I'd come if I had to walk every inch of the way. That is the way you get fellows, you know. There is half a dozen of them ready to fight over you now."

"To fight over me! Dreadful!" said the young lady, disapprovingly. "I hope you are not one of the half dozen, Mr. Wallace?"

"No," said Mr. Wallace, who was young and pink and known by his intimates as "Bunny." "But I'd—I'd die for you all the same, if it would do any good."

"It wouldn't, I assure you," was the laughing rejoinder. "Fighting and dying are altogether out of date. There are so many pleasanter things to be done now, don't you think so? Braving the storm, for instance, on a night like this. And here comes another belated cavalier," as through the blinding swirl of snow without a sleigh dashed up to the front door, and in another moment good Mrs. Dixon's motherly voice was heard calling anxiously.

"Miss Randall? Nellie? Where is she? She

can not venture out to-night. It is impossible, Mr. Leigh."

Miss Randall, with blanching face, hurried into the wide hall where Allston Leigh stood shaking the snow from his great fur-lined coat, an excited group gathered around him.

"My dear, my dear!" Mrs. Dixon clasped the white-faced girl tenderly in her arms. "You must bear up like a brave girl. It is your grandfather—he has had another bad attack, and——"

"Is—is—dead?" the girl cried out, sharply.

"No, no, not yet—but—but——"

"He is dying and has sent for me," she said, quickly. "Oh, I must go, I must go."

"But, my dear child, it is impossible," said Mrs. Dixon, positively. "Mr. Leigh will tell you so himself. It was all he could do to get here."

"And getting worse every moment," said Leigh. "But—he was calling for you—and I had to come——"

"Calling for *me*—for *me*!" she echoed. "Oh, then I must go, I must go. It is all I can do—now—now."

"Dear, dear child, it is madness," pleaded Mrs. Dixon. "You'll never get to Rosecrofte. Nellie, Nellie, don't attempt it."

"Miss Randall, I protest!"

In the chorus that rose about her the girl's eyes sought Allston Leigh's face.

"You will take me?" she asked. "If I am willing to risk it, you will take me?"

"Yes," he answered.

And then the storm of remonstrance, of protestation fell about them—all in vain. In less than ten minutes, Nellie, wrapped in furs and robes that would defy arctic blasts, was seated at Leigh's side in the sleigh, skimming through the wild wintry storm, the wind shrieking behind them, snow and sleet beating pitilessly down upon their heads, the whole world a dim, blurred chaos of darkness and discord, in which they two were alone.

Their horse, the most powerful one in the Rosecrofte stable, had been rubbed down and fed generously, and took the homeward road with renewed spirit.

"We'll manage it," said Leigh, cheerily. "Don't be frightened. Selim knows the road well and wants to get home. Of course the Judge didn't know what sort of a night it was or he would not have sent for you. But I had to come."

And he told her how the shock had fallen

swiftly and unexpectedly while the old gentleman had been seated at his own fireside chatting pleasantly with Aunt Van.

"Luckily," added the speaker, "Vance was in the house. We came down this morning together at the Judge's invitation for a couple of days' shooting. He is doing all he can, but he fears the worst. The Judge is an old man now and—well, the end must come for us all."

She did not answer him, she seemed to have no words to-night. The light, mocking, brilliant Lie she had made of herself vanished in this shadow of death. He was calling for her, this old man whose pride and love and trust she had mocked and betrayed—he was calling for her, and she must go to him—and lie—to the last. A sickening self-loathing came over her—a horror of all that she had been and was—a deeper horror of all that she must be forever—unless—unless— And then thought paused, shivering before the alternative.

Confession, Retraction, Restitution!

The stern trilogy had been sounding for long through the mad music of her life.

Confession, Retraction, Restitution!

Confession, with all its humiliation. Retraction.

with all its scorn and disgrace. Restitution, with all its poverty, despair, abandonment.

For the sleep walker had wakened. With the stolen fruit held in her reckless grasp, she stood on the daring height she had gained—the waterfall thundering beneath her, and there was no help, no hope.

Confession, Retraction, Restitution!

The words that had been a soft, low, almost unheard whisper in the early days of her stolen life, had grown into a stern insistence that all the triumphs of these after years could not silence.

They seemed borne on the wings of the wind as she sped through the storm and darkness tonight at Allston Leigh's side. There was no light in heaven or earth to guide them. Fences, hedges—rows—all were buried, while ever and anon some fiercer gust would sweep a mighty drift, blinding and bewildering in their way.

"We'll make it all right," Leigh continued, cheerily. "Selim is doing nobly. We must be nearly on a line with Chapel Point now. Only a few miles more and we will see the lights of Rosecroft." But even as he spoke there was a shock, a lurch, and with an almost human cry of pain, Selim was down, struggling wildly in the traces.

A smothered exclamation burst from Leigh's lips as he leaped out of the sleigh to the horse's head, and vainly tried to help the snorting, quivering animal to his feet.

"Oh, don't, don't," cried the girl, pitifully. "Cut him loose from the traces—he is hurt—dreadfully hurt."

"Done for, I am afraid," said Leigh, grimly. "There must be a ditch or something here we can't see, and the poor beast has broken his leg."

"Oh, cut him loose!" she cried. "He is struggling so pitifully," and leaping from the sleigh, she stood beside Leigh in the darkness. "I will help you——"

"Stand back, in God's name," he called, sharply. "We can see to do nothing, nothing. And you, you!"

"Don't think of me," she said. "I will sit here in the sleigh while you go for help. There are houses all along the road."

"The road," he echoed, helplessly. "We have lost the road or this would not have happened. We are—I do not know where. I should have known this venture was madness," he cried, desperately.

"But my madness, not yours," she said. "I

took the risk. Oh, the poor horse! Poor Selim! Can we do nothing for him?"

"What is the horse to you, your safety, your life?" A great drift swept down upon them as he spoke, and he had to fling his arm about her to steady her against its blinding rush. "You must get back in the sleigh," he said, huskily.

"And then—then?" she asked.

"I have loosed the traces. I will pull it myself."

"You can not," she said. "The runner is broken. I felt it go as the sleigh lurched. We must walk. We are not in the wilderness. There must be shelter somewhere within reach. And it is all my fault, from beginning to end. So don't swear at yourself under your breath any more, please." There was a new music in her tone, that wonderful light, brave note with which women like this meet peril when love is near. Leigh's heart leaped to it as if it were a bugle call. He would save her, shelter her, keep her from all harm to-night—and forever after.

"Put your arm in mine and hold fast, and we will try—" the wind howling down upon them nearly tore away speech and breath—"we will try to find a way together."

And the strength of ten men seemed to enter

into Allston Leigh as with that slender form clinging to him for life and safety, he faced the wild sweep of snow and sleet, the mad rush of the scurrying drifts that swept by them like troops of sheeted specters, all the wild turmoil of this terrible night, his heart aglow.

But the light hold on his arm grew heavier each moment.

"Have you any idea where we are?" his companion's voice trembled as she asked the question with all the old lightness. "We seem to have passed earthly bounds and to be adrift in space."

"Not quite. There is a telegraph pole," he answered, "which means we've struck the turnpike again. Poor Selim was making for the short cut home. Don't be afraid. No harm shall come to you. I am strong enough for both." She struggled on at his cheery word, but her feet were numb, a strange torpor was creeping over her, she felt as if she were swaying over a great void, Allston Leigh's arm her only hold. Then faintly through the storm of wind came a welcome sound.

"Sleighbells!" cried Leigh, jubilantly. "Hello, there, hello! Help, help here, help!" A great double sleigh, speeding swiftly through the storm, stopped at the summons.

"Who calls?" shouted the driver.

"Here, here, man. We have broken down and we are miles from home. Take us in, for God's sake. This is Miss Randall of Rosecrofte with me. I am Allston Leigh——"

"Lord!" cried a cheery, familiar voice through the wild darkness. "This is luck, Judge."

"Mills!" exclaimed Leigh, in amazement.

"Nobody else," was the hearty rejoinder, as the muffled driver held to his champing steeds. "Can't let go of these here horses, for they're a bit skeery, Judge, but just put the lady in and give your orders. This team is yours to command. Plenty of b'arskin back there to keep you warm, miss. Lord, Judge, but it was luck to strike you this way, sure."

"Luck, indeed!" said Leigh, as he lifted the half-fainting girl into the sleigh, and wrapped her warmly in the "b'arskin," and then sprang to the front seat beside the driver, who continued to shout his cheerful explanations over the storm. "I drove out with two of Rockton's men to-day, to see about a grinder they had put in a stone yard down 'bout here. They wanted me to stay all night with the rest, but it takes more than a baby blizzard like this to house me. Got to be in Washington to-morrow

morning, to put in that petition, Judge, for I can't fool around here all winter. Now where shall I take your lady? Steer this machine where and how you please, so as to get her under roof quick."

"Keep straight on," said Leigh. "I'll tell you when to turn—we're all right now. Not three miles from Rosecrofte," turning to the muffled figure behind him. "We are all—all right."

There was no answer. The girl, wrapped warmly in the bearskin, felt as if she were turned to stone. The laughing, mocking, beautiful Lie that she had been for more than two years crouched there in the darkness, still and cold, while Barbara Graeme lived again at Daffy's voice.

It was all gone—gone—the glittering dream—she was back again on the old broken porch of the Road House, with Rip fluttering in her arms. She was seated on the soapbox in Daffy's store listening to her first love tale. She was in the black-beamed old kitchen with Gran stirring the bean soup. She was the friendless starveling again, in her sunbonnet and sweater, but with no gilded chains holding her, no warning voice thundering in her soul day and night, no fear or remorse eating into her heart. She was Barbara Graeme again and free, free, free!

The end had come. Daffy was here, and the lie she had lived would shrivel before his honest eyes at the first glance. How or whence he had come she was too dull and numbed to think. And like one who in stony calm awaits the death blow, she sat wrapped in the fur robes. Mute and still while the sleigh swept on through the white wastes, with the mocking wind shrieking behind them, and the deep voices of the two men who loved her coming brokenly to her in the lulls of the storm.

"That petition you fixed up is all right, Judge, it'll do the business. We'll get him out to die free. If it hadn't been for you taking hold I couldn't have managed it at all. Here is your gate."

And the sleigh swung through the wide stone gateway and up the avenue to the front porch of Rosecroft.

"Safe home!" cried Leigh, triumphantly, as he sprang out to assist his companion to alight. But there was no answer, no movement. The slight figure within had slipped down, white and senseless, among the cushions.

"Nellie, Nellie! Great heavens, she is dead!" cried Leigh in an agony of terror.

"Lord, no, Judge; no! Here, catch hold of

these horses, boy!" said Daffy, flinging the reins excitedly to Scip, who had come hurrying out at the sound of sleighbells.

But before Mills could reach the Judge's side, Leigh had caught up the unconscious girl in his arms. Her head rested on his shoulder, hat and furs had fallen back, and the red-gold hair swept in disorder from a face pale and sharpened into the olden outlines to-night. As the light from the open door of Rosecrofte fell full upon her Daffy staggered, his wild cry of recognition lost in the turmoil of the storm.

Weasel again! Weasel borne into this splendid home in Allston Leigh's arms. Great heavens, was he going mad or—or——

And then as he stood there dazed, blinded, buffeted by the wind and sleet, the memories seared into his faithful heart flashed out into life and light again. Bixby Creek—the little cottage on the hillside—the covered litter that bore away the injured girl—the special train he had watched from the banks!

It was Judge Randall's granddaughter, the men had told him—Judge Randall's granddaughter they were taking away. Great drops of sweat stood out on Daffy's brow as he wrestled with the be-

wildering thoughts that faced him, when Leigh's voice, kindly and anxious, roused him.

"Mills, my dear fellow, where are you? Let Scip put away your horses and come in for the night."

"No, no; thank you, Judge." The cheery voice sounded hoarse and strange as Mr. Mills emerged from the shadow of the great porch.

"The—lady——?"

"Is all right, or will be in a few moments, the doctor says. Merely a faint from cold and exhaustion," answered Leigh. "But, great heavens, you are shaking with the cold. You must come in and have a drink, at least, before you go on."

And dazed, desperate with the bewildering doubt pressing upon him, Daffy followed Leigh through the open door into Judge Randall's home.

CHAPTER XVI

THE JUDGE'S SWEETHEART

THROUGH the great picture hall, with its rows of portraits, past the stately stretch of drawing-rooms and library, Leigh led his bewildered guest. Late as was the hour there was light and warmth everywhere at Rosecrofte to-night, even down in the kitchen, where old Aunt Dill croaked and groaned over the wide hearth, and the servants, gathered in solemn expectancy, talked of the "old Marse" who was passing away. While up in her own room beautiful Miss Nellie was being warmed and coddled into safety under Aunt Van's tender care.

The wide dining-room with its crimson hangings, its gleaming silver and glass, was a cheery shelter. A log fire leaped and crackled on the spacious hearth, and lit with ruddy glow the life-sized portrait above that only to-day had been unpacked from its wrappings and lifted into place. Mr. Leigh's guest stood dumb before it. It was a girl in the full bloom of life and loveliness, her arms full of roses. The graceful figure in its ex-

quisite gown was strange to Mr. Mills, but the turn of the head, the red-gold hair, the eyes, the wonderful sea-gray eyes, held him mute and breathless.

"*Her* picture!" And there was something in the Judge's tone that struck like a death-pang through Daffy's heart. "It took the prize at the Paris Salon last year, and has just come home. It is a wonderful likeness."

A wonderful likeness, indeed! Through all the glamour of gown and jewels and flowers, Daffy could see the girl in the old gray sweater—the sharp-tongued starveling of the Road House—the little gray-eyed girl seated on his soapbox. It was Weasel, Weasel—*his* Weasel!

One thought alone stood clear in the mad whirl of his brain, the surge of his blood, the leap of his heart. If she had reached this—this—no word or glance from him should drag her down. He caught up the silver-mounted decanter that Leigh had put on the table beside him, and, pouring out a drink that made his host start, swallowed it at a draught. It steadied him.

"Your—your sweetheart, I take it, Judge?" he found voice to say.

"My sweetheart; yes, Mills—my wife, I hope

and trust in a not far future. As you've told me your heart story, I don't mind telling you mine. That little girl is the one woman in all the world to me, Mills, and you know what that means."

"I know—I know!" repeated Daffy, huskily. "Judge, it don't seem as if I did know anything clear to-night. Your sweetheart, is it, Judge? And how—how do you name her?"

"Elinor Randall," answered Leigh. "Her grandfather wished her to bear his name, though she is really Elinor Kent."

Elinor Kent! And then blinding light fell upon Daffy. Elinor Kent! The name he had himself carved pitifully on a wooden tablet over the grave under the old yew that any one who sought the dead girl might know. Elinor Kent! Elinor Kent!

The rich, full liquor that had been gaining life and spirit in the Randall cellars for fifty years was quickening Daffy's dull brain into keen life. Elinor Kent! The forgotten girl who had died in the Road House!

The fierce old catamount of a grandmother, who would have no questions asked, the sudden flight in the doomed train! It was Weasel, sharp, keen-

witted, starving Weasel who had stolen here in the dead girl's name and place.

Lord! The pluck of it, the grit of it, the mad daring of it! Though a pang fierce as that of the Spartan boy when his vitals were rended tore at Daffy's faithful heart, he vowed to himself to stand by and give no sign. Again he took up the decanter and poured out a draught that seemed only water to his parched throat, his burning veins.

"Here's to her, Judge, then! Here's to your sweetheart, and to you." He lifted the glass with a shaking hand. "Here's—here's luck—and—and—love to you both. And though I'm off to my own hills in a day or two now, and ain't likely to ever bother you again, Judge, I'd sort of like it when everything is settled between you to have you tell her my little girl's story—Weasel's story, Judge. Tell her how lonely she was and how pitiful, and how hard everything went agin her. You couldn't blame her for nothing, Judge—you couldn't blame poor little Weasel for doing nothing that would change her hard luck. She was up against it from the time she was born. Yes, Judge, I'd like that beautiful lady up there to know about my poor little girl that died, Judge—that was killed—in the wreck."

"I'll tell her, Mills," answered Leigh, wondering a little at the strange earnestness of the request, but concluding that the liquor Mills had quaffed recklessly had gone to his head and loosened his honest tongue. "It's a story of simple, faithful love that will touch her heart as it has touched mine."

"I ain't looking for that, Judge," said Daffy, huskily. "Though the faithful love is there, as you say—nothing can kill it, nothing in life or death. If Weasel wasn't dead, Judge, if she was living, I'd stand by her through thick and thin, Judge, though I never got a look or a word for it. I'd stand by her, no matter what she did," and Daffy rounded out his explanation with a passionate oath that made his hearer start.

"Now I'm going, Judge. No, I couldn't stay," as Leigh ventured a remonstrance. "I just *couldn't* stay to-night. I've got to get out again into the storm. It's good-night, Judge, and good luck to you and your sweetheart—to you and to her." And Daffy, who had reached the front door while he was speaking, wrung Leigh's hand in a mighty grip and strode out on the porch, sprang into his sleigh, and dashed off into the storm. How

or where he went he never knew—the rest of that wild night was a hideous blur of snow and sleet and darkness, of sweeping drifts and shrieking wind, through which one picture flamed fire-lit before his mental vision.

The Judge's sweetheart, the girl with the red-gold hair, the sea-gray eyes, who had been borne away from the little mountain under Daffy's own despairing gaze more than two years ago! He saw it all now—he saw it all. Weasel—Weasel, pale and pinched, hungry, starving Weasel, had reached out desperate hands for all that had been denied her—had stolen the dead girl's name and home and place. And he would stand by her again and again, he swore it, as he sped on through the storm and darkness—he would stand by Weasel's lie though his own faithful heart was rent in twain.

* * * * *

As Leigh turned back into the hall after his parting with Mills, Madame Van came down the stairs. All the lines of age marked her fine old face to-night; her eyes were dim with tears.

"The Judge is sinking fast, Allston. Thank God the priest has come. Father Martin is ill with the grip, but happily Father Lane was down

at St. Barnabas' for a short visit, and he came on horseback through the storm."

"And Nellie?" asked Allston, eagerly.

"She has recovered completely, but is dreadfully nervous and shaken. Allston, that girl's heart is yours, I know. Your name was on her lips as she returned to consciousness. And oh, I wish—I wish that her grandfather could know that all was settled between you before he goes. He told me this evening, just before the death stroke fell, that he would rather give her to you than to any man on earth."

"Dear old man, would to God that he might leave us with his dying blessing," said Allston, with emotion. "Let me see her, let me plead with her, Aunt Van. Of late, I have had hope that——"

"Hope!" repeated Aunt Van. "I have surety that she loves you, Allston. I know how to read a girl's heart. Come. She is up in the sitting-room waiting for a summons to her grandfather's dying bed. He is sleeping fitfully now. Go to her, Allston; she will listen to you to-night, I know."

Leigh sprang up the stairs like a boy. He knew the sitting-room of Rosecrofte well. It was

in the old wing of the house—the original manor of Colonial days, which had a simple, homely charm the later edifice lacked. The low ceiling, the wainscoted walls, the small, deep-set windows belonged to a generation long gone by. Here were gathered pathetic relics of the wifehood and the motherhood of the past—sewing-table and work-basket, and writing-desk. A toy-house in the far corner, the tiny rocking-chair which the baby Nellie had called her own. The brick chimney-place where, in later years, Allston Leigh and Milly Randall had roasted chestnuts and popped corn, was ruddy with cheerful blaze to-night and in the chintz-cushioned chair before it was a slender figure gowned in a soft white cashmere negligée—a Parisian fancy, that mimicked in its straight graceful lines, its silver trceries, the garb of the Greek goddess of old. The red-gold hair had been knotted into a loose coil, the young head lay back on the flowered cushion, the gray eyes stared drearily into the open fire.

What was coming to her? The girl did not know. She sat there dully awaiting her fate. Even the river was frozen against her to-night—there could be no rest in its gleaming depths.

Daffy! What Nemesis had brought Daffy to

her side—Daffy, keen-eyed, outspoken Daffy? What fiery judgment had brought Daffy to bear witness to her living lie? The end had come, as she felt it must. There was but one dull hope flickering in the blackness, that the old man dying in yonder room might never know—that in mercy he might never know. Then suddenly a quick footstep sounded behind her—a tender voice called her name, and Allston Leigh, with all his soul shining in his eyes, was kneeling at her feet.

Life, love, safety again! Life, love, safety! In the wild rapture of her relief all lesser doubts vanished. He was pleading with her, the one man she had loved all these glittering, mocking years, the man she had loved from the first.

“Sweetheart, you will listen, you will give that noble old man dying in there this last happiness? He knows me, he trusts me, I have been almost like a son to him—let him bless our love before he goes.”

How the deep music stirred the chilled blood in her heart! And she had struggled against this strong, sweet call so long—she had striven to put land and seas, even the gilded fetters of a loveless betrothal between her and Allston Leigh, all in vain. To-night she was weak and shaken, be-

wildered by the horrors of death and darkness and danger. Heaven closed against her impenitence. Faith, hope, all things sweet, holy, divine, denied—only love was left—this human love, that she must blind, deceive to the end. As Allston Leigh's wife there could be no retraction—she must live a lie to the last.

But all the light, mocking strength that had upheld her was gone. Without, the storm raged, the wind shrieked, the snow-drifts swept over rose bower and rose garden; without, the shadow of death lay in heavy gloom—there seemed no light in heaven or on earth but the glow of this fireside where love was pleading. Her whole heart was crying surrender, but she started to her feet, pale, trembling, desperate, making a last stand against herself and him.

"I have warned you, I have warned you!" she said, in a quivering voice. "I am not good and true like Milly. I am strange and wayward and—and different."

"I know it," he answered. "It is for that I love you. You are yourself."

"Myself!" she echoed. "Is it that self you love, really? If I stood here before you to-night poor, shabby, low-born like—like that poor Rachel Var-

ney of whom you once told me—that girl whom the proud Randalls scorned——”

“You would still be the one woman in all the world to me,” he answered. “My love—my wife.”

“You will dare it, then,” she said, with a long-drawn breath. Then her pale face kindled and she held out both hands to him. “Oh, love of my life, I—I will dare it, too!”

And while the mocking winds shrieked around the gables of the old manor, while the great oaks that had guarded Rosecrofte for a hundred years seemed to sway appealing arms to the midnight sky, while Roger Randall lay semi-conscious in his splendid chamber, while Father Lane and Dr. Vance kept anxious watch near, Allston Leigh sat in a dream of rapture at his sweetheart's side.

“A light broke upon me to-night in the storm,” he said. “There was a note in your voice as we wandered out there in the snow-drifts that made me wish that we could be wanderers forever. But it was surely your good angel that sent Mills on your track.”

“He did not come in?” she asked, in a low voice.

“Only for a moment. I made him take a drink before he ventured out into the storm. A fine fellow, a regular rough diamond. He has made a

pile of money out of a machine for crushing stone. Some scoundrels tried to steal his patent, and I fought the case to a finish for him—so he feels he is under undying obligations to me.”

“He—he lives near?” the question came in a strained tone.

“Oh, no, out in his own mountains. As keen, hard-headed a fellow as I ever saw. Has only one soft spot for which we should feel sympathy to-night—his sweetheart, who is dead, and whom he mourns with a simple fidelity that is touching in such a rude, strong fellow. He got on the subject to-night as he stood before your picture.”

“My—my picture!” she gasped.

“Yes. He was struck by it, of course, as every one high or low is. And I suppose it brought back his own love story. Such a poor, pitiful love story as it was, dear—and yet somehow Mills tells it with a rude eloquence that grips the heart. The girl—she had a queer name—Birdie, Bunny, no, Weasel—that was it—Weasel. She was a little stunted, half-starved thing, as I judge, whose very forlornness won Mills’ big heart. Her father was in prison—and she had never any show at all. And she died—was killed somehow. Mills always chokes up when he comes to that, and can’t go on.

But there's something great in that fellow's honest love for the poor little beggar. It has really taken all the glow out of his good fortune, that he can not fling the fast coming dollars at her feet. He wouldn't ask a word or look from her, he said, only to see her happy—this poor little girl who never had any chance. Why, the fine fellow actually offered me his whole patent if I'd help him to get her father out. It seems the poor wretch is dying in prison, and Mills is ready to give his last cent to set him free for that dead girl's sake."

A strange, low cry startled the speaker. His listener had slipped down on her knees, her face buried in the cushions of her chair.

"Dearest, Nellie, dearest!" he cried, putting his arm tenderly around her.

"Oh, I can bear it no longer—no longer!" she cried. "Allston, Allston, I—I——"

But Aunt Van's voice at the door arrested the wild words on the girl's lips.

"Nellie, your grandfather is calling for you, dear child."

CHAPTER XVII

A DEATH HOUR

THE lights burned low in the death chamber. In the high, old-fashioned bed, whose damask curtains were flung back to give the dying man air, Judge Randall, his handsome old face pinched and ashen, was propped up among his pillows, struggling for breath.

The small table beside him, with its crucifix, its tapers, its "fayre white clothe" told that the last sacred rites of that Church to which he and his forefathers had clung through all change and time had been administered to its loyal son.

Dr. Vance stood gravely watchful at his patient's pillow. Father Lane, who had been kneeling by the bed whispering words of hope and comfort, rose as the newcomers entered, and made room for them by the dying man.

"Nellie!" the failing ear caught the sound of her coming. "My dear little girl, I can not see you, all is dark. Nellie, are you here?"

"Here—grandfather," the name came with a low, choked sob, as the speaker sank down and

pressed the groping hand to her lips, the hand that had filled her life with all earth's gifts and blessings. How cold, how helpless it was to those lying lips now!

"I am leaving you, my little girl, leaving you forever. Ah, my child, my poor Elinor's child, in this awful hour—you are my one thought—my—my one fear."

"Oh, I am not worth thought or fear, dear grandfather, best of friends. Do not think of me now," she sobbed.

"I must," he gasped, "I—I must. Before God I will be held—accountable. My stubborn pride—my neglect—my—my years of—of," his breath failed. "Father," he whispered, "Father, speak for me. Tell her—what—what I would say."

"My child, the fear weighing upon this parting soul is for you." It was the voice that had followed her through all these lying years that was speaking now—the voice that had blessed the little starveling of the Road House, that had roused the blinded girl at St. Barnabas', that had thundered God's judgment on the brilliant society queen scarcely two weeks ago. Its accents were solemn with pity and compassion.

"Your grandfather feels—too strongly indeed, as

I tell him—that he is responsible for your refusal of the light of Faith that is your inheritance.”

“Oh, no, no!” she cried, desperately, as a picture of the true Elinor, clinging to her dead mother’s faith with such pathetic trust, rose before her remorseful memory. “Grandfather, no, do not blame, do not reproach yourself. It is I who am weak, wicked, false. You have given me the Faith—you have given it to me. Let no remorse darken your peace, for oh, I believe as you do. As God is my witness, I believe—I believe!”

“Then, then, my child,” the icy hand seemed to tighten its dying grasp, “you will accept—you will confess—practise—that Faith? You will turn to God—to the Church of your fathers—you will—live—die—in that—Faith—as—as I do? Promise—promise, little girl, my little girl?”

“My God, my God!” she cried, despairingly.

“Sweetheart,” it was Allston Leigh’s deep, tender voice in her ear, “give the promise he asks. I will make it easy, blessed, to keep, dearest.”

She lifted her bowed head and looked up at him. Oh, the awful mockery of those tender, trusting eyes that met her wild, hunted gaze! He would make it easy, blessed, for her!

“My child,” and again Father Lane spoke, “it is

God who calls you by this dying voice. Surely, if you believe, you can not refuse this last request?"

"Father, no, no, I can not. I can not, grandfather. I promise—I promise—all—all you ask."

"And I promise, too, in her name," Allston Leigh said, in a moved voice. "Leave her heart and soul in my care without fear, dear old friend. She is to be my wife."

"Allston, my dear boy, Allston," the dying eyes brightened, and the Judge stretched out his stiffening hand to Leigh's grasp, "this is more than I asked. God bless you both for it, my children, my dear children.

"Vance—the pain again—the pain!"

The cold hand loosened its grasp. The Judge fell back gasping among his pillows. Vance moistened the dying lips. Leigh, dropping on his knees, flung his arm about the trembling form of his betrothed, while clear and strong, above the shriek and moan of the wind, above the sobs of the servants gathered in the hall without, above all the storm and tumult, passion and pain of earth, arose the voice of the priest.

"Depart, Christian soul, from this world in the name of God, the Father Almighty, who created thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the

living God who suffered for thee, in the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee——”

And as those solemn words in all their surety of command fell upon her ear, it seemed to Barbara Graeme that she, too, gave up all of life to which she had so madly, desperately, clung. The Light had flamed into fire at last—the consuming Fire into which she must fling all.

“He has gone, dearest!” Allston Leigh was whispering tenderly, “gone, blessing our love with his last breath.”

She looked up. Vance was reverently closing the sightless eyes, Father Lane signing the cross on the death-damp brow. Outside the servants had burst, after the fashion of their race, into unrestrained moans and lamentations.

“Nellie, dear child, all is over. Come away,” said Aunt Van, tearfully.

“Not yet,” was the gasping answer, “not yet. Close the door, Allston. There is something I must say—here—and now——”

“Not now, dear,” he answered gently. “You have made the promise and will keep it, I am sure. You are under too sharp a strain. Come away.”

“No,” she cried, quickly, “I must speak here and now. Speak in the presence of God, the pres-

ence of death. I must keep my promise to him who lies before me—and it can not hurt or shame him now. I must confess myself for what I am, a living lie. I am not Judge Randall's granddaughter. I am not Elinor Kent."

"Nellie!" interrupted Leigh, in terror. "Good God, she is going mad. Nellie, dearest!"

"Hear me out!" she panted. "Elinor Kent died in my wretched home nearly three years ago. You have heard of that home, Allston, you told me of it to-night. For I am Barbara Graeme, the starveling, the beggar, the convict's daughter, the girl whom poor Daffy Mills loved and mourned. Father Lane!" she started to her feet, and stood white, breathless, desperate, before the priest. "You can bear witness to what I say. Look at me, Father, and remember the mission at Graystone Ridge—the messenger who led you to Elinor Kent's death-bed in the old house under the pines, the girl with the crow in her arms, the girl whom you blessed——"

"My God! Yes, yes, I see! I remember all—you are that strange girl—whom I blessed."

"Elinor Kent died the next day," the young voice rose clearer, steadier now on the breathless silence; "died even as the letter reached her call-

ing her home to Rosecrofte. And I," there was no plea, no extenuation in the pitiless self-accusation, "I stole her letters, her papers. I left her buried in a nameless grave in my own blighted, accursed home, and came here in her name, her place. How I could have done it I do not know, but the accident—the railroad wreck, made it easy for me at first, cruelly easy—and afterward, afterward," she paused, and for the first time in her confession her eyes were lifted to Allston Leigh's face. The hard lines into which that face had set vanished at the look.

"Nellie," he said, hoarsely, "what this mad, strange thing means, I do not know. But—but, it changes nothing, nothing. I hold you to your promise—nay, I claim it at once. Father, before any whisper of harm touches her, I would give her my name, home, protection. I would make her my wife now and here."

"Allston," called Aunt Van, tremulously, "oh, Allston, my dear boy. Not—not yet."

"Ah, you need not fear—you need not fear, Madame Van," and that grand dame, panoplied in worldly wisdom as she was, felt a sharp pain pierce her heart at the dull despair of the young voice. "I will not marry him. I will not marry him,

Madame Van, not if it were to save me all that I lose to-night—even—even—his love.

"I will go away—away from this world in which I have no right."

"Nellie, Nellie!" pleaded her lover.

"I am not Nellie," she said, and the sharpness of death's pang was in her voice. "Nellie lies dead under the old yew-tree on the mountain. I am the convict's daughter of whom you told me to-night. I am the Weasel whom poor Daffy Mills loved—I am Barbara Graeme." And she broke from the death-bed group as she said the words, and made her way blindly, somehow, through the wide hall, with its moaning, sobbing servants, into her own room, where, locking the door, she threw herself upon her knees, her face buried upon the bed.

She had flung away all things—she was crushed, ruined, broken-hearted, homeless, friendless, penniless—but at last—at last she could cry to God for mercy. At last she was free—she was free! But even while her long-prisoned soul felt the thrill of release, the woman's heart knew all the anguish of its sacrifice. Her clear vision, sharpened by suffering, saw the way opening before her in all its hopeless desolation—a

desert path—lit by fire—lit by fire! She must go back—back to the old home—the old life!

The old life—after all that she had known, after these years of dazzling queendom! She must go back humbled, beggared, disgraced, her story perhaps blazoned through the length and breadth of the land. She must go back, but where, how? The old Road House stood black and drear under its sheltering pines a thousand miles away, and she was here, here with all doors, all paths, all hearts closed against her—she was here without home or friend or place. Allston Leigh! The fire burned into her woman's pride as she thought of him, of his manly plea to shield and save her, of Aunt Van's quick protest, that voiced already the world's sentence upon her crime.

Crime! Ay, that was what he had called a lesser wrong years ago—for she had stolen name, home, love, as well as gold.

Ah, the fire was burning with fiercer power each moment, the fire that must consume destiny, the glittering, mocking lie she had lived—the fire that alone could save her shrinking soul.

And the old pagan nature, unsubdued by long-rejected grace, roused into a last fierce defiance at the pain. She could not bear it, she would not!

There was escape still, escape from the shame, the horror, the awful dearth and desolation before her—there was one escape still. She rose from her knees, holding to the carved bed to steady her trembling limbs and slowly made her way to her lace-draped table, scattered with dainty trinkets in pearl and ivory and silver, with costly perfume and jewel caskets and all the exquisite toilet accessories of a reigning belle.

She opened a hidden drawer and took from it a tiny box she had bought almost for its weight in gold from an old French chemist last summer when her torturing doubts and fears prevented natural sleep. He had sold these *pilules de sommeil* with a solemn warning. "No more than two, never, never, mademoiselle. Three, four, and you would never wake."

"Never wake!" The words came back clearly as she stood there with the open box looking at the little silvery pellets gleaming therein. "Never wake!" What a restful end to all the pain, the shame, the agony before her. To sleep and never wake—and it would be so simple, so easy! It would quiet, hush all things, if, when they came to look for her next morning they could find her asleep, never to wake! Never to hear the cold scorn or

colder pity of the world's judgment, never to meet its curious, cruel eyes! Never, oh, never again to see Allston Leigh's face wear the stern, set look it had worn for one moment to-night before it had softened into a manly compassion that could not be love—oh, never more love!

Never to wake! The young face was very pale and cold now—all its delicate outlines sharp and clear cut; only the gray eyes burned with strange fire and light as the slender white fingers took up the silvery pellets—two, three, four! Ah, there should be no doubt—five—five!

And then she would lie down in the beautiful bed there and sleep, never to wake, like the good old man who had loved her. She paused as the thought of his last sleeping flashed before her mind. The struggle, the pain, the darkness, and over it all the clear, strong voice rising in solemn command:

“Depart, Christian soul, from this world, in the name of God the Father Almighty, who hath created thee, in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God who suffered for thee, in the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee.”

And as the solemn words with which the Church ushers the soul before God's judgment-seat came

back to the wretched girl trembling on the brink of everlasting perdition, the deadly pellets fell from her hand. She flung herself down upon the floor with the penitent cry at last upon her lips: "O God, have mercy on me and forgive—forgive——"

And as she lay there crushed and broken a memory came back to her of the one sweet spot she had known, where the voice and gaze of the world did not reach, where all was peace and pity and charity. Ah, if she might hide in that blessed shelter for a while, until she could find strength to keep on her desolate way. The gray light of the early dawn was stealing through her curtained window as she rose and looked out. The storm had ceased, all without was a white pathless waste—a death scene, in which hope and life were lost. Rose bower and rose garden, grassy slope and gleaming river were shrouded alike.

Yesterday Miss Randall, of Rosecrofte, would have recoiled at the mere thought of braving this wintry wilderness, but this morning it was the hardy little mountain maid of the Road House that, doffing all her dainty finery, slipped into the black gown made for her Lenten days in Italy, and stealing softly down through the back staircase

of the old wing, opened the door that led into the snow-wreathed rose arbor, and took her soft, silent way over the trackless wastes once again—the light, sure-footed Weasel of old.

* * * * *

Allston Leigh had paced his room almost until day. After that strange deathbed scene, there had been a long, agitated discussion in the library. The truth of that startling confession stood out now in clear, revealing light. Dr. Vance, who had sent the telegram from Bixby Creek, Father Lane, whose confused remembrance of the girl had always been a perplexing mystery to him, Leigh himself, with poor Mills' story echoing in his ears, could not doubt. This girl whom he had loved was the beggar, the starveling, the convict's daughter, the pitiful little creature "who never had a chance." And when that chance had come to her she had seized at it with daring, reckless grasp, and held it. Doubting, fearing, trembling, his quickened thoughts recalled a thousand things that had bewildered and perplexed him in her changing moods, her mocking coqueties.

False, false, his whole soul seemed to cry out in anguish and bitterness—false to the heart's core!

And yet—yet she had cast away a ducal coronet,

she had turned from scores of eager suitors, she had given up dazzling place and power and safety in a far-off world to come back here, to ever-present peril and shame—for love's sake.

And as the proud, lofty nature shook with its contending emotions, the words of that other lover came back to Allston Leigh. "You couldn't blame Weasel, no matter what she did, Judge, no matter what she did." Blame her! And then a great wave of conquering love overleaped all the stern barriers of pride, honor, bitterness. The lift of the red-gold head, the glance of those starry eyes, the fair hands outstretched at last to his appeal as he stood before her in the firelight glow last night—this had been truth, he knew, truth though all else were the blackest of lies. Truth—and he would hold to it and to her cost what it might.

"There is but one thing to be done," he said, briefly. "She is my promised wife. As my wife this story can be hushed forever. I am Judge Randall's lawyer, his executor. All matters of unjust inheritance can be quietly arranged without publicity or scandal. I can give her an honored name and home."

"Allston," pleaded Aunt Van, "think, in God's

name, think. Think of her past—her father—her bold, daring, long-lived lie.”

“It has been confessed, atoned for, and forgiven,” he answered. “And from all that follows she must have the shelter of her husband’s arms, her husband’s heart. So to-morrow she shall be my wife—and your niece, Aunt Van.”

And from the stern resolve of that tone Aunt Van knew there could be no appeal. She went tearfully away to her own room—good, worldly-wise woman that she was, with neither pity nor mercy for the girl she had loved in her heart to-night. In all her sixty odd years good Madame Van had never had such a shock, and she wept helplessly, hopelessly, until she dropped at last into a fitful sleep. It was Lottie’s frightened voice that roused her. The little maid had gone into her young lady’s room as usual this morning to find it vacant.

“I’se looked everywhar,” said Lottie, tremulously, “up and down and round de house and Miss Nellie ain’t nowhar, Madame Van. De bed ain’t been stirred and that ar medicine is spilled all over de floor.”

Aunt Van started up, conscious of a sharp stab of remorse in her quick alarm. The girl—the

wretched, guilty girl that she had left alone in her despair! The girl who, from such a dazzling height of pride and beauty and power had fallen into depths beyond reach!

Chilled with an awful fear, Aunt Van hurried to Nellie's beautiful room. The soft white robe she had worn last evening lay in a snowy heap upon the floor, but jewels, trinkets, even the silver purse, with its generous allowance of pocket money were untouched. Only the little box of *pillules de sommeil* lay open—its contents scattered. Aunt Van paled at the sight. It was a trembling, ashen-faced old woman that met Allston Leigh a few moments later in the hall. He had been roused, too, by Lottie's alarm.

"She is not here, not in the house, you say?" he cried. "Great heavens, she could not have gone out in this waste of snow. Aunt Van, what have you heard? What have you seen?"

"These," whispered Aunt Van, opening her shaking hand and showing the little white pellets within. "Allston, they are, if taken rashly, death—quick, painless death. And the box has been opened, the pellets scattered. Oh, God forgive me for leaving that wretched girl alone in her despair."

An icy terror gripped her listener's heart, as a vivid memory flashed back to him—a white-robed girl, seated in a skiff, and looking with dreamy eyes into the shining river. What was it she had said to him on that summer day long ago? "If I am ever missed, Mr. Leigh, look for me in some such depths as these. It would be such a quick escape from poverty and shame." Oh, how cruelly the words came back to him—the words that even in that glad sunshine had struck a chill to his heart.

That shining river was closed against her despair now, but a darker river stood open—a river on which there was no gleam of sun or star.

"And with heaven and earth shut against her," he thought in his agony, "with no friends, no home, no God——"

"Beg pardon, Marse Allston"—old Scip had been standing for fully five minutes beside Leigh, unseen, unheard. "Don't like to be obtrusive, sah, but a boy just come over with dis hyah note, and I thought it mout be consequential, sah," concluded Scip, feeling that the solemnity of the time demanded polysyllables.

And Allston Leigh broke open the hastily

folded missive and read in 'trembling, wavering lines:

"Nellie is here, safe with me. Leave her in peace, poor, sorrowing child, at the feet of her God.

"SISTER CELESTIA."

CHAPTER XVIII

"SO AS BY FIRE"

FOR three weeks after that wild midnight ride, Mr. J. Dafton Mills lay in his luxurious room at the hotel with two doctors and a white-capped nurse steering him through a very narrow passageway between life and death.

When he roused from bewildering dreams of shrieking winds and scurrying drifts, of long vistas of stately rooms ruddy with firelight, and of a girl who, with red-gold hair and arms full of roses, smiled in mockery through all, he began to gain—in Western fashion—hard and fast.

"Doctor," he said, to the first medical gentleman in command on his next visit, "how long before I am out of this?"

"You have had a close shave with double pneumonia, Mr. Mills. You ought not to venture out for four weeks at least."

"Four weeks!" echoed Mr. Mills. "You may know your business, but not your man, doctor. I'm off, either in a Pullman car or an undertaker's casket, within six days. I'll never get my lungs

clear in this consarned dry-rotting East of yours—I want a breath of air from the mountain top where the world is new."

"Six days! My dear sir, it will be madness," said the doctor. "You will have to take the consequences——"

"I will," answered Daffy, and he did, to the doctor's dismay. Six days later found him propped up with pillows in the drawing-room of a palace car, and speeding westward as fast as the Limited Express could fly.

"I have to get away from it all quick," was his mental soliloquy. "If I should meet the Judge and her together again it might be too much for me. And I've got to stand by her as I swore. I've got to stand by Weasel to the death. I ain't a-blamin' her. No, I ain't a-blamin' her—luck was too hard— Lord, Lord!" as the picture of the girl with the roses stood full again before Daffy's thought, "Lord, but it took pluck and grit!"

Yet sturdy and steadfast as he held himself, it was rather a white-faced Mr. Mills that walked in suddenly upon his manager, Jake Jones, at the quarry store, and dropping into the leather chair that had replaced the old stool, announced he was "back for keeps."

"Money ain't give out?" asked Jake, staring.

"No," answered Daffy, "it's piling up and running over, sonny. But this here part of the world is good enough for me, and I've come back to irrigate it with a golden flood. I've come back to make this here Graystone Ridge the toppermost notch of this county."

"You've been sick, haven't you?" asked Jake, bluntly.

"Yes. I've been sick—worse than sick. I've been dotty—loony. I've had two doctors blowing gas into me to keep me alive and my veins pumped full of salt water. But I'm here to the good yet, as you'll see when I get to moving. How is business and what is the news? Anybody dead or buried or married?"

"Yes, I'm married," answered Jake, rather sheepishly.

"You!" exclaimed Mr. Mills, staring. "You! Well, all the fools ain't dead yet."

"No fool about it," answered Jake. "Greta is as nice a girl as you'll find in the Ridge."

"Oh, it's Greta Wonn, Fritzie's tow-headed sister? I take back all personal remarks, Jake. As a married man your salary doubles from this date. Take your pick from the electro-plated stock for

a wedding present, and may you be happy. Anything else happened of thrilling interest?"

"Buck Graeme," said Jake. "But you know all about Buck Graeme. You did the business for him—got him out, he said."

"Is he out?" asked Daffy, eagerly, for Graeme's fate had been lost like most other things in the blur of the last month.

"Out and dead," answered Jake, briefly.

"Dead!" gasped Daffy. "Good Lord!"

"Didn't live a week," continued Jake. "Old woman hed been living close to the prison so that she could see him every day. She brought him home to the Road House and thought she could keep him alive there. But it was no good—too far gone, I guess. Died right off. Was buried more than two weeks ago. Folks was pretty nice at the last, chipped in and gave him a decent burial on his own lot, and stocked up the old woman with wood and groceries. They tried to get her away, but she won't leave the place. Says she stood by her boy in life, and she'll stay by him in death till they lay her beside him."

"Tough," murmured Daffy, under his breath. "It's been pretty tough on all of them. And women do turn into old catamounts when they're

robbed of their young, Jake. So we'll have to look out for the poor old thing."

And with this kindly thought in his mind, Daffy turned his steps that evening toward the Road House. As he started from the store there came a flap of wings from the porch, and Rip, black and broken-winged as of yore, fluttered to his shoulder.

"Hallo, old chap!" said Daffy, stroking the feathered head. "You're on the wing still, eh? Come on, then, we'll take a look at your old roost together." And walking slowly, for he was still weak, Daffy was conscious of the invigorating thrill of his native air in every breath. For though the snow-wreaths still lingered on the loftier heights, there was a whisper of spring on the Ridge, the bare boughs were swelling with tiny buds, there were soft twitterings and rustlings in the pine thickets, venturesome vines were already green, and the "burn," fall-fed from the melting snows, was leaping joyously over the rocks. Honest Daffy was neither dreamer nor poet, but something in the chill, pale promise of the wakening spring recalled the white-faced, gray-eyed girl of long ago, the girl who had never had "no chance"—the girl who, with all the sap of a glorious youth frozen in her veins, had turned so desperately and daringly to

the sun and blossomed into the radiant vision that followed him now night and day.

"But we'll stand by her, old boy, won't we?" said Daffy, scratching the feathers of the crow, who in the last three years had often been his companion and confidant. "You and me will never croak her down, if she climbs to the stars. We'll just stand off and keep mum, though— What's the matter?" for with a loud, harsh caw Rip suddenly fluttered from his shoulder and flapped away on broken wing. And Daffy, looking up, startled at his quick flight, stood mute and breathless, indeed. A woman was coming down the road—a woman whose heavy black garments could not hide the slender grace of her form, a woman with deep shadows of pain under her gray eyes, and a mourner's veil falling over the red-gold of her hair.

"Rip!" she cried, tremulously, as the bird fluttered to its old place in her arms. "Daffy and Rip!"

"Weasel! Lord! I'm seeing things again! It ain't ever Weasel—back home!" said Daffy, gasping for breath.

"Yes," she answered, "it is Weasel, back home."

"And—and—and," speech quite failed Daffy. He could only hold the little hand she extended to

him and look up into the pale, shadowed face with eyes that mirrored his heart and soul.

"Ah, Daffy, Daffy!" she said, reading those honest eyes, "you know all. And it is all—all over, Daffy. That wild, mad, wicked dream—that lying life—that—that you saw."

"Weasel, no!" cried Daffy. "I didn't see nothing. I don't know nothing. I don't—don't ask nothing. Only—only—" and suddenly the tender lies died on his lips, and the kind face darkened. "If anybody has gone back on you—has driven you off—has hurt or shamed you, Weasel," a fierce oath broke from the speaker's lips, "I'll have it out with him—if it was a king on his throne."

"Oh, Daffy! No, dear, good, true, old Daffy, no, no, no. It was I—I—who broke—away. I who could live a lie no longer, Daffy. I who came back to be honest and true—my own poor, true self, before God and man."

But Daffy still stood with fierce eye and lowering brow. "If he that dared call you sweetheart—wife, almost, Weasel, has gone back on you, I'll settle him for it—highly born gentleman that he may be. I'll treat him like the cur and coward he is."

"Oh, Daffy, hush, hush!" she pleaded, "hush,

and listen to me, believe me, for I speak the truth at last. I told all—all—by that old man's death-bed to which you took me that awful night. Told all—how I had come there, mad, desperate, starving for all the good, beautiful things of life, in Elinor Kent's name and place. After three long, lying years I told all, Daffy. And though they were so shocked and hurt and shamed, they would have kept me there in my false place—kept me in pity, compassion—perhaps in—in love. But I would not stay. I would not stay, Daffy. I could not bear it, not even for all they could give. I need only be silent they said—he said—only silent and hide all. But I could not—I could not be the false, lying thing I had been all these years, any longer. And so—so I broke away from—from it all. I have put the gulf between us which their pride can never cross. I have come back to my old home and life—to my old poverty and sorrow and shame. Ah, I know what you would say, Daffy. I know you would spare me from it all—but that—that can not be—that can not *ever* be."

"I don't ask it," he said, huskily, for something in her voice, her look, had brought a choking sob into his throat. "I don't ask nothing, Weasel, but

to be your friend, your square, true, honest friend. And—to make things a bit easy for you—in the dark rough way you've got to walk—alone."

And they went on together through the gathering shadows in silence. Tears were falling from the gray eyes he knew, and he could not trust himself to speak. Under the black gloom of the pine, through the broken gate, up the weed-grown path to the old rotten porch, they passed to the door that stood a little ajar. A sound of low, piteous wailing came from within. The old woman had just come from the grave in the hollow and sat alone now on the fireless hearth mourning her dead.

The girl standing on the threshold drew a long, quivering breath as she heard.

"Grandmother!" she said, and there was a pitying tenderness in the tone that the Weasel of old had never breathed. "Poor, poor old grandmother," and pushing open the door, she stepped swiftly into the gloom within.

Barbara Graeme had come home! And Daffy, turning away, cast a comprehensive glance at house and porch and broken gate, and recalled the pictured walls and stately rooms still fresh in his memory.

The Road House and Rosecrofte! The gulf between yawned wide and deep indeed.

"I could cross it on one jump," thought Daffy, the old pain stirring in his heart. "Cross it and never feel a jolt. But the Judge—the Judge," Mr. Mills stopped at the broken gate and tried to fit his handsome, highborn legal adviser into this gloomy picture. "The Judge ain't, so to say, jumping stock. I guess Weasel is right. The gulf is too wide and black and deep. The Judge would balk at it, sure. He gave her the chance to stay by him and she wouldn't take it—and now—now," Daffy's shrewd common-sense took in the situation, "it ain't much wonder for a high-stepper like him to balk at this."

But Daffy was to find his rating of "high-steppers" wrong.

Three weeks later, while closing a deal for the new works that were to rouse the whole mountain side into electric life, Mr. Mills looked up startled at a familiar voice. The Judge stood before him, white, hollow-eyed, older by ten years than when he had seen him scarcely two months ago.

For a moment the two men looked at each other, all the heights and depths between them

leveled in their gaze, and then they gripped hands.

"You've come to find her," said Daffy, bluntly, "and it's none too soon."

"I have been ill," Leigh said, "very ill."

"You look it," was the answer. "She looks it, too. Folks can't go through the fires of Tophet and come out without a scorch. Fritzie," calling to that young person, who had just come in with a message to his new made brother-in-law, Jake. "Here, Fritzie, show this gentleman the way to the Road House."

And Allston Leigh followed his little tow-headed guide through the forest path, where now the leaf buds were opening and the young shoots were green and the setting sun lighted up the far-reaching vistas with gold, and everywhere in the soft whisper of breeze, the song of bird, the breath of waking blossom, was the call of the spring.

Everywhere! No! For suddenly the path up which Fritzie led opened into a rough, weed-grown road, where beyond its broken gate, its tottering porches, an old rambling house stretched black and gloomy under the sheltering pines—a house that seemed dark, desolate, hopeless as a tomb.

All around it in the untilled fields, the ruined outhouses, the brier-grown wastes of hollow and hill, there seemed to rest a blighting shadow that chilled all the sweet promise of nature. The only sign of life was a black crow, who at their coming fluttered off with a harsh caw from his perch on a rotten post beside the gate.

"Hallo, you're back too, are you, Rip?" cried Fritzie. "This 'ere is the place, mister. Just walk right in, for the folks stays most times in the back kitchen and won't hear you knock. I guess you won't want me no more—now you know the road."

"No, I won't want you," said Leigh, tossing his guide a dollar, and as Fritzie bounded delightedly away, the last touch of life seemed to go with him, and the awful gloom of the place fell upon the man standing in its shadow like the chill of death. And *this* was her home—from this black, hopeless desolation she had turned—madly, recklessly, to the sun.

The door stood half-open. He knocked. There was no answer. He pushed forward into the wide gloom of the old hall with its closed rooms on either side, its black-ribbed ceiling. A breath of perfume greeted him. On the wide table by the stairs was

an earthen jar filled with lilacs. The sight, the fragrance, smote him with a pain that nearly unarmed him—even here she caught pitifully at grace, beauty, and bloom. Oh, where was she that he might save her, lift her out of this hideous place into light and life again, his beautiful, his beloved one, who, in her shame, her remorse, had broken away and striven to put this black gulf of humiliation between his love and her forever! His heart torn with pity, anguish, tenderness, he pressed on, recklessly, into the great, black-beamed kitchen, where an old pot swung over the wide hearth. There were remnants of a scant meal on the bare table—coarse bread, a pitcher of milk, a bit of cheese, a bowl of soup. Her table! She, who had been fêted and toasted at princely banquets, who had reigned a fairy queen in lordly halls—her table, *this!*

And then as he stood there a cry rang out of the silence—a thrilling, tremulous cry, that made every pulse within him leap. It was her voice—her voice calling somewhere in those weed-grown wastes without for help, help.

He bounded through the wide-open door of the old kitchen, and sped where the voice was calling, over broken fence and field, down, down into a

great hollow that yawned deep and dark in the shadow of a heavy old yew.

There he found her kneeling beside the grandmother, who lay, ashen and rigid, over her boy's new-made grave.

"Help, help!" the girl cried, as she tried to lift the stiffened form to chafe the icy hands. "Oh, I thought she was upstairs, ill in her bed, until I missed her just now. Oh, grandmother, poor grandmother! Help, help!"

"Dearest, there is no help; she is dead," said a low, pitying voice at her side.

"Allston!" she started to her feet, with a sharp cry of pain. "Allston, here!" and she staggered back against the trunk of the old yew, and stood looking up at him despairingly. She wore the coarse black skirt and the sweater of old. The red-gold hair was drawn plainly from her wan, pale face. It was the white ghost of the woman he worshiped that faced Allston Leigh, yet his heart went out to her as she stood there in her misery, with a love that in the strength and depth of its human tenderness had a touch of the divine.

"I am here, yes, to claim my wife," he said, gently.

"Oh, no, Allston, no," and she fell on her knees

again beside her old grandmother as if for safety and shelter. "Look here—here. This poor old woman was the Rachel Varney of whom you once told me. I am her grandchild. Look at my convict father's new-made grave. Look where the poor girl lies whose name and place I stole for three wicked, false years. And you would take me, with all this to hide, into your home—your life—to be a lie still in your proud world? No, no—I can not shame you with my story, but it must stand. I have been false, false, false, long enough. I have turned to the light and truth. Poor, wretched, disgraced as it may be, I must live my own life."

"Then I live that life here with you," he said, resolutely. "Since you will not come to me, I come to you. I accept it all, beloved—all the sorrow and darkness that has shadowed your youth. We will turn to the light, the truth, together."

And kneeling beside her as she bent over her dead, he drew the weary head to his shoulder and kissed the tearful eyes, that, looking up into his own, read within them a love that through any fires of sacrifice would pass unscathed.

* * * *

And that vow breathed over the old graves beneath the yew was kept. Here in her own home,

Barbara and Allston Leigh took up their new life, fearing nothing, hiding nothing. But in the light and truth of their love the old Road House stood transformed. The darkening pines fell back into sunlit groves. The weed-grown wastes sloped out into verdant lawns and meadows, the closed rooms were opened into beauty and cheer. The wide-pillared porch was wreathed with roses, the "burn" swept in joyous music under a rustic bridge as it tumbled on its busy way—a water power for the great works that filled the valley with their cheerful life. The graves in the hollow were veiled in myrtle, while under the shadow of the old yew a pure white shaft "Sacred to the memory of Elinor Kent" arose, garlanded through all the summer time with living bloom. And as the happy years went by, the fortune and fame for which Allston Leigh had yearned found their way up the widening path that led to his mountain height and crowned him unasked.

"The Judge,"—the friendly title conferred by Daffy is Allston Leigh's rightfully now—"and the Judge's beautiful wife" are the pride and boast of the Ridge. The light and truth which their blended lives uphold shed a radiance far and near. The pretty church, crowded with the eager worshipers

that once had only the rare mission—the school-house with its sweet veiled teachers won from the shadows of Mount Merci to this busy field, the Boys' Club, the Girls' Library, the Mothers' Meetings—all that is high, holy, and uplifting find inspiration and help in the old Road House.

Even the ties of the old life hold. Dr. Vance and Milly, happy in their own wedded life, find no summer quite complete without their western visit. Father Lane pauses often for a few days' rest under the old pines, while Aunt Van—even Aunt Van—after an heroic struggle in which she upheld "her boy's" name and fame in the storm of gossip and criticism that broke upon him—even Aunt Van finds her yearly outing, where the world is new, the most invigorating time of her declining years.

And Daffy—next to the Judge, whom he never has attempted to rival—Mr. J. Dafton Mills is the biggest man in the Ridge. His quarries, his works, his power-house, his shops and stores and model cottages are athrill with busy, homely, happy life. He has never married—hasn't any time to think about it, he says, but he is a loved and honored guest at the Road House, the faithful friend, confidant, and helper of its master and mistress.

And he has a dearer title still, for as he walks up the flower-bordered path to the porch, where Rip, gray and old, dozes in full-fed comfort, another Barbara dances out on fairy feet to spring gaily into "Uncle Daffy's" arms. And as the red-gold head nestles down on his broad shoulder, Uncle Daffy kisses the velvet cheek and calls her by the old name.

"Watching for me, were you? Well, it's more than any one else ever did, little Weasel."

PRINTED BY BENZIGER BROTHERS, NEW YORK

STANDARD CATHOLIC BOOKS

PUBLISHED BY
BENZIGER BROTHERS

CINCINNATI:
243 MAIN ST.

NEW YORK:
36-38 BARCLAY ST. 214-216 W. MONROE ST.

CHICAGO:

Books not marked *net* will be sent postpaid on receipt of advertised price. Books marked *net* are such where ten cent. must be added for postage. Thus a book advertised as *net*, \$1.00, will be sent postpaid on receipt of \$1.10.

Complete descriptive catalogue sent free on application.

INSTRUCTION, DOCTRINE, APOLOGETICS, CONTRO-
VERSY, DEVOTION, MEDITATION, THEOLOGY, LITURGY,
HOLY SCRIPTURE, BIBLE, SERMONS, PHILOSOPHY,
SCIENCE, HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY

- ABANDONMENT; or, Absolute Surrender of Self to
Divine Providence. CAUSSADE, S.J. *net*, 0 50
- ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.
TESNIERE. 0 50
- ANECDOTES AND EXAMPLES ILLUSTRATING
THE CATHOLIC CATECHISM. SPIRAGO. *net*, 1 50
- ANGELS OF THE SANCTUARY. For Altar Boys.
MUSSEY. *net*, 0 15
- ART OF PROFITING BY OUR FAULTS. TISSOT. *net*, 0 50
- ASSERTIO SEPTEM SACRAMENTORUM; or, De-
fence of the Seven Sacraments, by Henry VIII.
O'DONOVAN. *net*, 0 75
- AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ST. IGNATIUS. O'CONOR,
S.J. *net*, 1 25
- BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY, THE. A history
of conditions of Christian life in the first three
centuries of our era. SHAHAN. *net*, 2 00
- BENEDICENDA; or, Rites and Ceremonies to be Ob-
served in some of the Principal Functions of the
Roman Pontifical and Roman Ritual. SCHULTE. *net*, 1 50
- BLOSSOMS OF THE CROSS. For those who lead a
life of suffering or seclusion. GIERHL. 1 25
- BONOMELLI, RT. REV. I. HOMILIES ON THE
EPISTLES AND GOSPELS. 4 vols. *net*, 5 00
- HOMILIES ON THE COMMON OF SAINTS.
2 vols. *net*, 2 50
- THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES; or, Discourses
for All the Great Feasts except Those of the
Blessed Virgin. 4 vols. *net*, 5 00
- BOOK OF THE PROFESSED. Vols. I, II, III. Each, *net*, 0 75
- BOY-SAVER'S GUIDE. Society Work for Lads in
Their Teens. QUIN, S.J. *net*, 1 35
- BUDS AND BLOSSOMS. Spiritual Readings for All
Seasons. COLTON. *net*, 1 25
- CASES OF CONSCIENCE for English-speaking Coun-
tries. SLATER, S.J. 2 vols. *net*, 2 50

CATECHISM EXPLAINED. SPRAGG.	net, 2 50
CATHOLIC BELIEF. FAA DI BRUNO. Paper, net,	
0.10; Cloth,	net, 0 25
CATHOLIC CEREMONIES. DURAND. Ill. Paper,	
0.80; Cloth,	0 50
CATHOLIC HOME ANNUAL. Calendars, Stories, etc. Ill.	0 25
CATHOLIC PRACTICE AT CHURCH AND AT HOME. KLAUDER. Paper, 0.25; Cloth,	0 60
CATHOLIC TEACHING FOR CHILDREN. WRAY. Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 35
CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE DEVOTION. GROU, S.J.	net, 0 75
CHARITY THE ORIGIN OF EVERY BLESSING.	net, 0 50
CHILD PREPARED FOR FIRST COMMUNION, THE. ZULUETA, S.J.	0 05
CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS. A Defence of the Catholic Faith. DEVIVIER.	net, 2 00
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION. O'CONNELL.	net, 0 60
CHRISTIAN FATHER, THE. Instructions. CRAMER. Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 35
CHRISTIAN MOTHER, THE. Instructions. CRAMER. Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 35
CHRIST IN TYPE AND PROPHECY. MAAS. Vols. I and II. Each.	net, 2 00
CHRIST'S TEACHING CONCERNING DIVORCE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT. GIGOT.	net, 1 50
CLERGYMAN'S HANDBOOK OF LAW. SCANLAN.	net, 1 25
COMPENDIUM JURIS CANONICI. SMITH.	net, 2 00
COMPENDIUM JURIS REGULARIUM. BACHOFEN.	net, 2 50
COMPENDIUM SACRAE LITURGIAE. WAPPEL- HORST.	net, 2 50
CONSECRANDA; or, Rites and Ceremonies Observed at the Consecration of Churches, Altars, etc. SCHULTE.	net, 1 50
CORRECT THING FOR CATHOLICS, THE. BUGG.	0 50
COUNSELS OF ST. ANGELA TO HER SISTERS IN RELIGION.	net, 0 25
DEVOTIONS TO THE SACRED HEART FOR THE FIRST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH. HUGUET.	0 25
DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS, THE. NOLDIN, S.J.	net, 1 25
DIGNITY AND DUTIES OF THE PRIEST. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
DIVINE GRACE. Explains the doctrine of the Church on divine grace. WIRTH.	net, 1 00
DIVINE OFFICE. Explanation of Psalms and Can- ticles. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
DOGMATIC THEOLOGY, OUTLINES OF. HUNTER. Vols. I, II, III. Each.	net, 1 50
ECCLESIASTICAL DICTIONARY. THEIN.	net, 5 00
EDUCATION OF OUR GIRLS, THE. SHIELDS.	net, 1 00
ELEMENTS OF ECCLESIASTICAL LAW. SMITH. Vols. I, II, III. Each.	net, 2 50
ENCYCLICAL LETTERS OF POPE LEO XIII.	net, 2 25
EPISTLES AND GOSPELS. Large type.	0 25
EUCCHARISTIC CHRIST. Reflections on the Blessed Sacrament. TESNIERE.	net, 1 25
EXPLANATION OF BIBLE HISTORY. NASH.	net, 1 60
EXPLANATION OF CATHOLIC MORALS. STAPLE- TON.	0 50

EXPLANATION OF THE BALTIMORE CATECHISM. KINKRAD.	net, 1 00
EXPLANATION OF THE COMMANDMENTS. ROLFUS.	0 50
EXPLANATION OF THE CREED. ROLFUS.	0 50
EXPLANATION OF THE GOSPELS AND CATHOLIC WORSHIP. LAMBERT. Paper, 0.20; Cloth.	0 50
EXPLANATION OF THE HOLY SACRAMENTS. ROLFUS.	0 50
EXPLANATION OF THE MASS. COCHEM.	0 50
EXPLANATION OF THE OUR FATHER AND THE HAIL MARY. LIGUORI.	net, 0 75
EXPLANATION OF THE PRAYERS AND CEREMONIES OF THE MASS. LANSLOTS, O.S.B.	net, 1 25
EXPLANATION OF THE SALVE REGINA. LIGUORI.	net, 0 75
EXTREME UNCTION. PHILLIPS.	0 05
FLOWERS OF THE PASSION. Devout Thoughts.	0 50
FOR FREQUENT COMMUNICANTS.	0 05
FOUR LAST THINGS. Meditations. COCHEM.	net, 0 75
FUNDAMENTALS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. Translated by Rev. J. P. M. SCHLEUTER, S.J.	net, 0 60
GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. GIGOT.	net, 2 50
GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. Abridged. GIGOT.	net, 1 50
GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. VERHEYEN.	net, 0 30
GENTLEMAN, A. Manners and Social Usages. EGAN.	0 50
GIFT OF THE KING, THE. An Explanation of the Mass for Children.	0 60
GLORIES AND TRIUMPHS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, THE.	2 00
GLORIES OF DIVINE GRACE, THE. SCHREIBEN.	net, 1 00
GLORIES OF MARY. Vols. I and II. LIGUORI. Each.	net, 1 50
GLORIES OF MARY. Popular edition.	0 50
GLORIES OF THE SACRED HEART. HAUSER, S.J.	0 50
GOD, CHRIST AND THE CHURCH. HAMMER.	2 00
GOFFINE'S DEVOUT INSTRUCTIONS.	1 00
GOLDEN SANDS. Counsels for the Sanctification and Happiness of Daily Life. 2 vols. Each.	net, 0 50
GREAT MEANS OF SALVATION, THE. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
GREAT SUPPER, THE. Discourses on Weekly Communion. COUSE, S.J.	net, 1 25
GREETINGS TO THE CHRIST CHILD. Poems for Children.	0 00
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES. BURNS.	net, 1 75
GUIDE FOR SACRISTANS.	net, 0 85
HANDBOOK OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION. WILKINS, S.J.	net, 1 50
HARMONY OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. HEUSER.	net, 1 25
HELPS TO A SPIRITUAL LIFE. SCHNEIDER.	0 50
HIDDEN TREASURE; or, The Value and Excellence of Holy Mass. BLESSED LEONARD. Paper, 0.15; Cloth.	0 25
HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. ALZOG. 8 vols.	net, 2 00
HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. BUSHNAG-BRENNAN. 8vo.	net, 2 00

HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. BUSINGER-BRENNAN.	18mo.	0 50
HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. BRUECK.	8 vols.	net, 2 00
HISTORY OF ECONOMICS. DEWE.		net, 1 50
HISTORY OF THE MASS. O'BRIEN.		net, 1 25
HISTORY OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION. COBBETT.		0 50
HOLY EUCHARIST AND FREQUENT AND DAILY COMMUNION. O'CONNELL.	Paper, 0.25; Cloth,	0 60
HOLY EUCHARIST, THE. LIGUORI.		net, 1 50
HOLY HOUR, THE. KNILEY.		net, 0 05
HOLY MASS, THE. LIGUORI.		net, 1 50
HOLY VIATICUM OF LIFE AS OF DEATH, THE.	A provision for the journey of life as well as of death. DEVER.	net, 0 75
HOLY WEEK, COMPLETE OFFICE OF. Cheap	Edition, cloth, net, 0.20; Cloth,	0 45
HOW TO COMFORT THE SICK. KRBS.		0 50
HOW TO MAKE THE MISSION.		0 10
INCARNATION, BIRTH, AND INFANCY OF CHRIST. LIGUORI.		net, 1 50
INDEX TO LIGUORI WORKS.		net, 0 10
IN HEAVEN WE KNOW OUR OWN. For those who have lost dear ones by death. BLot, S.J.		net, 0 60
INSTRUCTIONS FOR FIRST COMMUNICANTS. SCHMITT.		net, 0 60
INSTRUCTIONS ON THE COMMANDMENTS AND SACRAMENTS. LIGUORI.	Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 25
INSTRUCTIONS ON MARRIAGE, POPULAR. GIRARDEY.	Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 25
INSTRUCTIONS ON PRAYER, POPULAR. GIRARDEY.	Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 25
INSTRUCTIONS TO PARENTS, POPULAR. GIRARDEY.	Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 25
INTERIOR OF JESUS AND MARY. GROU, S.J.	2 vols.	net, 2 00
JESUS LIVING IN THE PRIEST. MILLET-BYRNE.		net, 2 00
LADY, A. Manners and Social Usages. BUGG.		0 50
LAWS OF THE SAVIOUR. Talks on the Commandments for Children.		0 60
LESSONS OF THE SAVIOUR. Christ's Miracles Described for Children.		0 60
LETTERS OF ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI. 5 vols. Each,		net, 1 50
LIFE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN. ROEMER-BRENNAN.		0 50
LIFE OF CHRIST. BUSINGER-BRENNAN. Profusely illustrated.		net, 10 00
LIFE OF CHRIST. COCHEM-HAMMER.		0 50
LIFE OF CHRIST. Adapted from BUSINGER. MULLETT.		2 00
LIFE OF SISTER ANNE KATHARINE EMMERICH. McGOWAN.		net, 1 75
LIFE OF VEN. CRESCENTIA HOSS.		net, 1 25
LIGHT FOR NEW TIMES. A Book for Catholic Young Women. FLETCHER.		net, 0 60
LIGUORI. COMPLETE WORKS. Vols. I-XXII. Each,		net, 1 50
LITTLE MASS BOOK. LYNCH.		0 05

	LITTLE OFFICE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.	0 65
	LIVES OF THE SAINTS. Adapted from ALBAN BUTLER.	0 50
et, 2 00	LIVES OF THE SAINTS FOR CHILDREN. BERTHOLD.	0 60
et, 1 50	LIVES OF THE SAINTS, PICTORIAL. SHEA.	
et, 1 25	Illustrated.	3 00
0 50	LIVES OF THE SAINTS, SHORT. DONNELLY.	0 60
	LIVES OF THE SAINTS, LITTLE PICTORIAL.	
	Illustrated.	1 25
0 00	LOURDES. Its Inhabitants, Its Pilgrims and Miracles.	
et, 1 50	CLARKE, S.J.	0 50
et, 0 65	MANUAL OF HOMILETICS AND CATECHETICS.	
et, 1 50	SCHUECH.	net, 1 25
	MANUAL OF MORAL THEOLOGY. SLATER, S.J.	
	Vols. I and II. Each.	net, 2 75
et, 0 75	MANUAL OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND CHRISTIAN PERFECTION. HENRY, C.S.S.R. Paper,	
0 65	0.25; Cloth.	0 60
0 50	MANUAL OF THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY.	
0 10	GEIERMANN, C.S.S.R. Paper, 0.25; Cloth.	0 60
	MARY, HELP OF CHRISTIANS. Instructions, Legends, Novenas, and Prayers. HAMMER.	2 00
1 50	MARY THE QUEEN. A Life of the Blessed Virgin	
0 10	for Children.	0 60
0 00	MEANS OF GRACE. Complete Explanation of the	
	Sacraments. Fully illustrated. ROLFUS-BRAENDLE.	3 00
0 60	MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY. BAXTER.	net, 1 50
0 65	MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY. HAMON. 5 vols.	net, 5 00
0 25	MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY. VERCRUYSE, S.J.	
	2 vols.	net, 3 50
	MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY OF MONTH.	
0 65	NEPVEU-RYAN.	net, 0 75
	MEDITATIONS FOR MONTHLY RETREATS. For	
1 35	Religious.	net, 0 50
	MEDITATIONS FOR RETREATS. St. FRANCIS DE	
00	SALES.	net, 0 85
00	MEDITATIONS FOR THE USE OF THE SECULAR	
50	CLERGY. 2 vols. CHAIGNON, S.J.	net, 4 50
00	MEDITATIONS ON THE LIFE, THE TEACHINGS,	
	AND THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST. LG.	
	2 vols.	net, 3 50
00	MEDITATIONS ON THE MONTH OF OUR LADY.	
00	MULLANEY.	net, 0 75
50	MEDITATIONS ON THE PASSION. By a Passionist.	0 50
	MEDITATIONS ON THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS	
10	CHRIST. PERINALDO.	net, 0 75
0	MIDDLE AGES, THE. Sketches covering the period	
0	from the fifth to the fifteenth century. SHAHAN.	net, 2 00
0	MISCELLANY. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
0	MOMENTS BEFORE THE TABERNACLE. Prayers	
	and Aspirations. RUSSELL, S.J.	net, 0 50
	MONTH, LITTLE, OF THE SOULS IN PURGATORY.	
		net, 0 25
	MONTH OF MAY, LITTLE.	net, 0 25
	MONTH, NEW, OF THE HOLY ANGELS. St.	
	FRANCIS DE SALES.	net, 0 25
	MORAL PRINCIPLES AND MEDICAL PRACTICE.	
	COPPENS, S.J.	net, 1 00

MORE SPIRITUAL READINGS FOR MARY'S CHILDREN.	MADAME CECILIA.	0 50
MY FIRST COMMUNION.	The Happiest Day of My Life. BUCHMANN-BRENNAN.	net, 0 75
NEW TESTAMENT.	32mo, flexible cloth,	net, 0 18
NEW TESTAMENT.	Illustrated.	net, 0 60
NEW TESTAMENT.	(India Paper.) Leather, gold edges,	net, 0 80
NEW TESTAMENT.	12mo.	0 50
OUR OWN WILL and How to Detect it in Our Actions.	ALLEN.	net, 0 85
OUTLINES OF NEW TESTAMENT HISTORY.	GIGOT.	net, 1 50
OUTLINES OF SERMONS FOR YOUNG MEN AND YOUNG WOMEN.	SCHUEN.	net, 2 00
PARADISE ON EARTH; or, A Religious Vocation the Surest Way in Life.	NATALE, S.J.	net, 0 50
PARISH PRIEST ON DUTY, THE.	HEUSER.	net, 0 60
PASSION AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST.	LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
PASTORAL THEOLOGY.	STANG.	net, 1 50
PATRON SAINTS FOR CATHOLIC YOUTH.	Illustrated. Vols. I, II, III. MANNIX. Each,	0 60
PATRON SAINTS FOR CATHOLIC YOUTH.	Illustrated. MANNIX. Each,	0 10
	St. Agnes, St. Aloysius, St. Anne, St. Anthony, St. Blase, St. Bernard, St. Bridget, St. Catharine, St. Cecilia, St. Charles, St. Clare, St. Elizabeth, St. Francis Xavier, St. Helena, St. Joseph, St. Louis, St. Margaret, St. Martin of Tours, St. Michael, St. Monica, St. Patrick, St. Philip Neri, St. Rose of Lima, St. Teresa.	
PEARLS FROM FABER.	Selections from His Works. BRUNOWE.	net, 0 50
PERFECT RELIGIOUS, THE.	D'ORLEANS DE LA MOTTE.	net, 1 00
PHILOSOPHIA MORALI, DE.	RUSO.	net, 2 00
POLITICAL AND MORAL ESSAYS.	RICKABY, S.J.	net, 1 75
PRAXIS SYNODALIS.		net, 0 75
PREACHING.	LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
PREPARATION FOR DEATH.	LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
PRINCIPLES, ORIGIN AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE U. S.	BURNS.	net, 1 75
PRIVATE RETREAT FOR RELIGIOUS.	GRIERMANN, C.S.S.R.	net, 1 50
PULPIT SKETCHES.	Outlines of Sermons. LAMBERT.	net, 1 35
QUEEN'S FESTIVALS, THE.	Instructions on the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin for Children.	0 60
REASONABLENESS OF CATHOLIC CEREMONIES AND PRACTICES.	BURKE. Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 35
RELIGIOUS STATE, THE.	LIGUORI.	net, 0 50
RETREATS FOR SISTERS, TWO.	WIRTH.	net, 1 00
RIGHTS OF OUR LITTLE ONES.	On education. Conway, S.J.	0 05
RITUALE COMPENDIOSUM.	Sacristy Ritual.	net, 0 90
ROMAN CURIA AS IT NOW EXISTS.	MARTIN, S.J.	net, 1 50
ROSARY, THE.	Instructions on the Rosary for young men and women. GARESCHÉ, S.J.	net, 0 50

ROMA. Ancient, Subterranean, and Modern Rome in Word and Picture. By Rev. ALBERT KUHN, O.S.B., D.D. Preface by CARDINAL GIBBONS. 18 bi-monthly parts, each 0.85 postpaid. Subscription by the year, 6 parts, 2.00; complete work, 6.00. 938 text illustrations, 40 full-page illustrations, 3 plans of Rome in colors. The best and most thorough production of its kind.	
ROSARY, THE CROWN OF MARY, THE.	0 10
RULES OF LIFE FOR THE PASTOR OF SOULS.	
SLATER-RAUCH.	net, 0 75
SACRAMENTALS. The Sacramentals of the Church Explained. LAMBING. Paper, 0.20; Cloth,	0 50
SACRED HEART STUDIED IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, THE. SAINTRAIN, C.S.S.R.	0 50
SACRIFICE OF THE MASS WORTHILY CELEBRATED. CHAIGNON, S.J.	net, 1 50
SAINTS AND PLACES. Ayscough. Description of Italy's most historic spots. 22 full-page illustrations.	net, 1 50
ST. ANTHONY. ANECDOTES AND EXAMPLES.	
KELLER.	net, 0 75
ST. ANTHONY, THE SAINT OF THE WHOLE WORLD. WARD.	0 50
SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI: SOCIAL REFORMER. DUBOIS.	0 50
SECRET OF SANCTITY. CRASSET.	0 50
SERMONS FOR CHILDREN OF MARY. CALLERIO.	net, 1 50
SERMONS FOR CHILDREN'S MASSES. FRASSINETTI.	net, 1 50
SERMONS FOR SUNDAYS. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
SERMONS FOR THE SUNDAYS AND CHIEF FESTIVALS OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR.	
2 vols. POTTGEISER.	net, 2 00
SERMONS FROM THE LATINS. BAXTER.	net, 2 00
SERMONS, FUNERAL. WIRTH. Vols. I and II.	
Each.	net, 1 00
SERMONS, LENTEN. WIRTH.	net, 2 00
SERMONS, NEW AND OLD. WIRTH. 8 vols. Each.	net, 2 00
SERMONS ON THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.	
SCHREURER-LABANCE.	net, 1 50
SERMONS ON THE DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART. SIX. BIERBAUM.	net, 0 75
SERMONS, SHORT, FOR LOW MASSES. SCHOUPE.	net, 1 25
SERMONS, SHORT. HUNOLT. 5 vols. (WIRTH.)	
Each.	net, 2 00
SHORT CONFERENCES ON THE SACRED HEART.	
BRINKMEYER.	net, 0 75
SHORT COURSE IN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE. For Non-Catholics Intending Marriage with Catholics.	0 10
SHORT HISTORY OF MORAL THEOLOGY.	
SLATER, S.J.	net, 0 50
SHORT MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY.	
LASOUSSE.	0 50
SHORT STORIES ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.	net, 1 00
SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS FOR FIRST COMMUNION.	0 05
SOCIALISM AND CHRISTIANITY. STANG.	net, 1 00
SOCIALISM: ITS THEORETICAL BASIS AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION. CATHERIN, S.J.	net, 1 50

SOCIALISM, MORALITY OF MODERN. MING, S.J.	net, 1 50
SOCIALISM, RELIGION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF. MING, S.J.	net, 1 50
SOUVENIR OF THE NOVITIATE.	net, 0 50
SPECIAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. Part I. GIGOT.	net, 1 50
SPECIAL INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. Part II. GIGOT.	net, 2 00
SPIRAGO'S METHOD OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. MESSMER.	net, 1 50
SPIRITUAL CONSIDERATIONS. BUCKLER, O.P.	net, 1 25
SPIRITUAL DESPONDENCY AND TEMPTATIONS. MICHEL, S.J.	net, 1 25
SPIRITUAL EXERCISES FOR A TEN DAYS' RE- TREAT. SMETANA, C.S.S.R.	net, 0 75
SPIRITUAL PEPPER AND SALT. STANG. Paper, 0.25; Cloth,	0 60
SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE AND THE LIFE OF SAC- RIFICE IN THE RELIGIOUS STATE. GIRAUD- THURSTON.	net, 2 00
SPOILING THE DIVINE FEAST. ZULUETA.	0 05
STORIES FOR FIRST COMMUNICANTS. KELLER.	net, 0 50
STORIES OF THE MIRACLES OF OUR LORD, THE.	0 60
STORY OF THE DIVINE CHILD. LINGS.	0 60
STORY OF THE FRIENDS OF JESUS.	0 60
STORY OF JESUS. Simply Told for the Young. R. MULHOLLAND.	0 60
STRIVING AFTER PERFECTION. BAYMA.	net, 1 00
SUNDAY-SCHOOL DIRECTOR'S GUIDE. SLOAN.	net, 0 50
SUNDAY-SCHOOL TEACHER'S GUIDE. SLOAN.	net, 0 50
SURE WAY TO A HAPPY MARRIAGE. Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 35
TALKS WITH THE LITTLE ONES ABOUT THE APOSTLES' CREED.	0 60
THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THE CONFES- SIONAL. SCHIELER-HEUSER.	net, 3 50
THOUGHTS AND AFFECTIONS ON THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR. BERGAMO.	net, 2 00
THOUGHTS ON THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. LASANCE.	net, 1 50
TRAINING OF CHILDREN. MADAME CECILIA.	net, 0 75
TRUE POLITENESS, LETTERS ON. DEMORE.	net, 0 75
TRUE SPOUSE OF CHRIST. LIGUORI.	0 50
TRUE SPOUSE OF CHRIST. Vols. I and II. LIGUORI. Each,	net, 1 50
VENERATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN. ROHNER-BRENNAN.	0 50
VICTORIES OF THE MARTYRS. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
VIGIL HOUR. RYAN, S.J.	0 05
VISIT TO EUROPE AND THE HOLY LAND. FAIRBANKS.	1 50
VOCATIONS EXPLAINED.	0 10
WAY OF THE CROSS. Paper,	0 05
WAY OF THE CROSS. Illustrated. Eucharistic Method.	0 10
WAY OF THE CROSS. Illustrated. Method of St. FRANCIS ASSISI.	0 10

WAY OF THE CROSS. Illustrated. Method JESUIT FATHER.	0 10
WAY OF THE CROSS. Illustrated. Method St. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI.	0 10
WAY OF SALVATION AND OF PERFECTION. Meditations. LIGUORI.	net, 1 50
WAY OF INTERIOR PEACE. BRUCKER.	net, 1 50
WHAT CATHOLICS HAVE DONE FOR SCIENCE. BRENNAN.	net, 1 25
WHAT THE CHURCH TEACHES. DRURY. Paper, 0.25; Cloth,	0 60
WHAT TIMES! WHAT MORALS! SEMPLE, S.J. Paper, 0.15; Cloth,	0 35
WITH CHRIST, MY FRIEND. SLOAN.	net, 0 75

NOVELS, POETRY, ETC.

AGATHA'S HARD SAYING. ROSA MULHOLLAND.	0 50
BACK TO THE WORLD. CHAMPOL.	net, 1 35
BEST STORIES BY THE FOREMOST CATHOLIC AUTHORS. 10 vols.	3 50
BLACK BROTHERHOOD, THE. GARROLD, S.J.	net, 1 35
BOND AND FREE. CONNOR.	0 50
BUT THY LOVE AND THY GRACE. FINN, S.J.	1 00
BY THE BLUE RIVER. I. CLARKE.	net, 1 35
CARROLL DARE. WAGGAMAN.	1 25
CIRCUS RIDER'S DAUGHTER. BRACKEL.	0 50
CONNOR D'ARCY'S STRUGGLES. BERTHOLD.	0 50
CORINNE'S VOW. WAGGAMAN.	1 25
DAUGHTER OF KINGS, A. HINKSON.	1 25
DION AND THE SYBILS. M. KEON.	0 50
FABIOLA. WISEMAN. Illustrated.	0 50
FABIOLA'S SISTERS. CLARKE.	0 50
FATAL BEACON. BRACKEL.	1 25
FAUSTULA. AYSCOUGH.	net, 1 35
FLOWERS OF THE CLOISTER. Poems. SISTER LA MOTTE.	1 25
FORGIVE AND FORGET. LINGEN.	0 50
FRIENDLY LITTLE HOUSE, THE, AND OTHER STORIES. TAGGART.	0 50
HEARTS OF GOLD. EDHOR.	1 25
HEIRESS OF CRONENSTEIN, THE. HAHN-HAHN.	0 50
HER BLIND FOLLY. HOLT.	1 25
HER FATHER'S DAUGHTER. HINKSON.	1 25
HER JOURNEY'S END. COOKE.	0 50
IDOLS. NAVERY.	0 50
IN GOD'S GOOD TIME. ROSS.	0 50
IN THE DAYS OF KING HAL. TAGGART.	1 25
"KIND HEARTS AND CORONETS." HARRISON.	1 25
LET NO MAN PUT ASUNDER. MARTÉ.	1 00
LIGHT OF HIS COUNTENANCE, THE. HARTÉ.	0 50
LITTLE CARDINAL, THE. PARR.	1 25
LINKED LIVES. DOUGLAS.	1 50
MARCELLA GRACE. ROSA MULHOLLAND.	0 50
MARIAE COROLLA. Poems on the Blessed Virgin. HILL.	1 25
MELCHIOR OF BOSTON. EARLS.	1 00
MIGHTY FRIEND, THE. L'ERMITÉ.	net, 1 50
MIRROR OF SHALOTT, THE. BENSON.	net, 1 50

MISS ERIN. FRANCIS.	9	50
MONK'S PARDON, THE. NAVERY.	0	50
MR. BILLY BUTTONS. LECKY.	1	25
MY LADY BEATRICE. COOKE.	0	50
NOT A JUDGMENT. KEON.	1	25
OTHER MISS LISLE, THE. MARTIN.	0	50
OUT OF BONDAGE. HOLT.	1	25
OUTLAW OF CAMARGUE, THE. DE LAMOTHE.	0	50
PASSING SHADOWS. YORKE.	1	25
PASSION FLOWERS. Poems. HILL.	1	25
"PAT." HINKSON.	net,	1 25
PERE MONNIER'S WARD. LECKY.	1	25
PILKINGTON HEIR, THE. SADLER.	1	25
PRISONERS' YEARS. CLARKE.	net,	1 25
PRODIGAL'S DAUGHTER, THE. BUGG.	1	00
RED INN AT ST. LYPHAR, THE. SADLER.	1	25
ROAD BEYOND THE TOWN, THE, AND OTHER POEMS. EARLS.	1	25
ROMANCE OF A PLAYWRIGHT, THE. BORNIER.	1	00
ROSE OF THE WORLD. MARTIN.	0	50
ROUND TABLE OF AMERICAN CATHOLIC NOV- ELISTS.	1	50
ROUND TABLE OF IRISH AND ENGLISH CATH- OLIC NOVELISTS.	1	50
ROUND TABLE OF GERMAN CATHOLIC NOV- ELISTS.	1	50
ROUND TABLE OF FRENCH CATHOLIC NOV- ELISTS.	1	50
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. I.	1	00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. II.	} A series of interesting articles on a great variety of subjects of much educa- tional value. Profusely il- lustrated.	1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. III.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. IV.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. V.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. VI.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. VII.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. VIII.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. IX.		1 00
ROUND THE WORLD SERIES. Vol. X.		1 00
RULER OF THE KINGDOM, THE. KEON.	1	25
SECRET OF THE GREEN VASE, THE. COOKE.	0	50
SHADOW OF EVERSLEIGH, THE. LANSDOWNE.	0	50
SO AS BY FIRE. CONNOR.	0	50
SOGGARTH AROON. GUINAN.	1	25
SON OF SIRO, THE. COPUS.	1	50
SONGS AND SONNETS. EGAN.	1	00
STORY OF CECILIA, THE. HINKSON.	1	25
STUORE. EARLS.	1	00
TEMPEST OF THE HEART, THE. GRAY.	0	50
TEST OF COURAGE, THE. ROSS.	0	50
THAT MAN'S DAUGHTER. ROSS.	1	25
THEIR CHOICE. SKINNER.	1	00
THROUGH THE DESERT. SIENKIEWICZ.	net,	1 25
TRAINING OF SILAS. DEVINE, S.J.	1	25
TRUE STORY OF MASTER GERARD, THE. SADLER.	1	25
TURN OF THE TIDE, THE. GRAY.	0	50
UNBIDDEN GUEST, THE. COOKE.	0	50
UNRAVELLING OF A TANGLE, THE. TAGGART.	1	25
UP IN ARDMUIRLAND. BARRETT.	net,	1 25

VOCATION OF EDWARD CONWAY, THE.	EGAN.	1 36
WARGRAVE TRUST, THE.	REID.	1 36
WAY THAT LED BEYOND, THE.	HARRISON.	1 25
WEDDING BELLS OF GLENDALOUGH, THE.		
EARLS.		not, 1 35
WHEN LOVE IS STRONG.	KEON.	1 25
WOMAN OF FORTUNE.	CHRISTIAN REID.	1 25
WORLD WELL LOST, THE.	ROBERTSON.	0 75

JUVENILES.

ALTHEA.	NIRDLINGER.	0 60
ADVENTURE WITH THE APACHES, AN.	FERRY.	0 45
AS GOLD IN THE FURNACE.	COPUS.	0 85
AS TRUE AS GOLD.	MANNIX.	0 45
BELL POUNDRY, THE.	SCHACHING.	0 45
BERKLEYS, THE.	WIGHT.	0 45
BEST FOOT FORWARD, THE.	FINN.	0 85
BETWEEN FRIENDS.	AUMERLE.	0 85
BISTOURI.	MELANDRI.	0 45
BLISSYLVANIA POST-OFFICE, THE.	TAGGART.	0 45
BOB-O-LINK.	WAGGAMAN.	0 45
BROWNIE AND I.	AUMERLE.	0 85
BUNT AND BILL.	C. MULHOLLAND.	0 45
BY BRANSCOME RIVER.	TAGGART.	0 45
CAPTAIN TED.	WAGGAMAN.	0 60
CAVE BY THE BEECH FORK, THE.	SPALDING.	0 85
CHARLIE CHITTYWICK.	BEARNE.	0 85
CHILDREN OF CUPA.	MANNIX.	0 45
CHILDREN OF THE LOG CABIN.	DELAMARR.	0 85
CLARE LORAIN.	"LEE."	0 85
CLAUDE LIGHTFOOT.	FINN.	0 85
COLLEGE BOY, A.	YORKE.	0 85
CUPA REVISITED.	MANNIX.	0 45
DADDY DAN.	WAGGAMAN.	0 45
DEAR FRIENDS.	NIRDLINGER.	0 60
DIMPLING'S SUCCESS.	C. MULHOLLAND.	0 45
DOLLAR HUNT, THE.	E. C. MARTIN.	0 45
ETHELRED PRESTON.	FINN.	0 85
EVERY-DAY GIRL, AN.	CROWLEY.	0 45
FAIRY OF THE SNOWS, THE.	FINN, S.J.	0 85
FIVE O'CLOCK STORIES.		0 50
FLOWER OF THE FLOCK.	EGAN.	0 85
FOR THE WHITE ROSE.	HINKSON.	0 45
FREDDY CARR'S ADVENTURES.	GARROLD.	0 85
FREDDY CARR AND HIS FRIENDS.	GARROLD.	0 85
FRED'S LITTLE DAUGHTER.	S. T. SMITH.	0 45
GOLDEN LILY, THE.	HINKSON.	0 45
GREAT CAPTAIN, THE.	HINKSON.	0 45
GUILD BOYS OF RIDINGDALE.	BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
HALDEMAN CHILDREN, THE.	MANNIX.	0 45
HARMONY FLATS.	WHITMIRE.	0 85
HARRY DEE.	FINN, S.J.	0 85
HARRY RUSSELL.	COPUS, S.J.	0 85
HEIR OF DREAMS, AN.	O'MALLEY.	0 45
HIS FIRST AND LAST APPEARANCE.	FINN, S.J.	1 00
HOSTAGE OF WAR.	BONESTEEL.	0 45
HOW THEY WORKED THEIR WAY.	EGAN.	0 85
IN QUEST OF THE GOLDEN CHEST.	BARTON.	1 15

"JACK."	0 45
JACK HILDRETH ON THE NILE. TAGGART.	0 85
JACK O'LANTERN. WAGGAMAN.	0 45
JUNIORS OF ST. BEDE'S. BRYSON.	0 85
JUVENILE ROUND TABLE. First Series.	1 00
JUVENILE ROUND TABLE. Second Series.	1 00
JUVENILE ROUND TABLE. Third Series.	1 00
KLONDIKE PICNIC, A. DONNELLY.	0 85
LEGENDS AND STORIES OF THE CHILD JESUS FROM MANY LANDS. LUTZ.	0 50
LITTLE APOSTLE ON CRUTCHES, THE. DELAMARE.	0 45
LITTLE GIRL FROM BACK EAST, THE. ROBERTS.	0 45
LITTLE MARSHALLS AT THE LAKE. NIXON-ROULET	0 60
LITTLE MISSY. WAGGAMAN.	0 45
LOYAL BLUE AND ROYAL SCARLET. TAGGART.	0 85
MADCAP SET AT ST. ANNE'S, THE. BRUNOWE.	0 45
MAKING OF MORTLAKE, THE. COPUS, S.J.	0 85
MARKS OF THE BEAR CLAWS, THE. SPALDING, S.J.	0 85
MARY TRACY'S FORTUNE. SADLIER.	0 45
MELOR OF THE SILVER HAND. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
MILLY AVELING. S. T. SMITH.	0 85
MORE FIVE O'CLOCK STORIES.	0 50
MOSTLY BOYS. FINN, S.J.	0 85
MYSTERIOUS DOORWAY, THE. SADLIER.	0 45
MYSTERY OF CLEVERLY, THE. BARTON.	0 85
MYSTERY OF HORNBY HALL, THE. SADLIER.	0 85
NAN NOBODY. WAGGAMAN.	0 45
NED RIEDER. WEHS.	0 85
NEW BOYS AT RIDINGDALE, THE. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
NEW SCHOLAR AT ST. ANNE'S, THE. BRUNOWE.	0 85
OLD CHARLMONT'S SEED BED. S. T. SMITH.	0 45
OLD MILL ON THE WITHROSE. SPALDING, S.J.	0 85
OUR LADY'S LUTENIST. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
PANCHO AND PANCHITA. MANNIX.	0 45
PAULINE ARCHER. SADLIER.	0 45
PERCY WYNN. FINN, S.J.	0 85
PERIL OF DIONYSIO. MANNIX.	0 45
PETRONILLA, AND OTHER STORIES. DONNELLY.	0 85
PICKLE AND PEPPER. DORSEY.	0 85
PILGRIM FROM IRELAND, A. CARNOT.	0 45
PLAYWATER PLOT. WAGGAMAN.	0 60
POVERINA. BUCKENHAM.	0 85
QUEEN'S PAGE, THE. HINKBON.	0 45
QUEEN'S PROMISE, THE. WAGGAMAN.	0 60
RACE FOR COPPER ISLAND, THE. SPALDING, S.J.	0 85
RECRUIT TOMMY COLLINS. BONESTEEL.	0 45
RIDINGDALE FLOWER SHOW. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
ROMANCE OF THE SILVER SHOON. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
SEA-GULLS' ROCK, THE. SANDEAU.	0 45
SEVEN LITTLE MARSHALLS, THE. NIXON-ROULET.	0 45
SHADOWS LIFTED. COPUS, S.J.	0 85
SHEER PLUCK. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
SHERIFF OF THE BEECH FORK, THE. SPALDING, S.J.	0 85
ST. CUTHBERT'S. COPUS, S.J.	0 85
STRONG-ARM OF AVALON. WAGGAMAN.	0 85
SUGAR-CAMP AND AFTER, THE. SPALDING, S.J.	0 85
SUMMER AT WOODVILLE, A. SADLIER.	0 45
TALES AND LEGENDS OF THE MIDDLE AGES. CAPELLA.	0 54

TALISMAN, THE. SADLER.	1 00
TAMING OF POLLY, THE. DORSEY.	0 85
THAT FOOTBALL GAME. FINN, S.J.	0 85
THREE GIRLS AND ESPECIALLY ONE. TAGGART.	0 45
TOLD IN THE TWILIGHT. MOTHER SALOME.	0 85
TOM LOSELY: BOY. COPUS, S.J.	0 85
TOM'S LUCK-POT. WAGGAMAN.	0 45
TOM PLAYFAIR. FINN, S.J.	0 85
TOORALLADDY. WALSH.	0 45
TRANSPLANTING OF TESSIE, THE. WAGGAMAN.	0 60
TREASURE OF NUGGET MOUNTAIN, THE.	
TAGGART.	0 85
TWO LITTLE GIRLS. MACK.	0 45
VIOLIN MAKER OF MITTENWALD, THE.	
SCHACHING.	0 45
WAYWARD WINIFRED. SADLER.	0 85
WINNETOU, THE APACHE KNIGHT. TAGGART.	0 85
WITCH OF RIDINGDALE, THE. BEARNE, S.J.	0 85
YOUNG COLOR GUARD, THE. BONESTEEL.	0 45

BENZIGER'S STANDARD FIFTY-CENT LIBRARY FOR EVERYBODY

Novels and Religious Books by the best Catholic Authors. Copyright books. Substantially and attractively bound in cloth. Complete list of books in library sent on application. Each volume, \$0.50.

CATHOLIC LIBRARIES

Books of Religious Instruction, Novels, and Juveniles, put up in libraries of 10, 12, and 20 volumes, at \$10.00, \$12.00, and \$15.00. Payable on the Easy Payment Plan of \$1.00 down and \$1.00 a month. List of libraries sent on application.

SCHOOLBOOKS.

Catechisms, Readers (The Catholic National Readers, The New Century Readers), Charts, Spellers, Grammar, Bible History, United States Histories, Benziger's Advanced Geography, Benziger's Elementary Geography, Graded Arithmetics, Three-Book Series of Arithmetics, Hymnbook, etc., etc. Complete list sent on application.

PRAYER-BOOKS

Complete illustrated catalogue will be sent on application.

Sizes of books in inches: 48mo, about $3\frac{3}{4} \times 2\frac{3}{4}$; large 48mo, about $4 \times 2\frac{3}{4}$; small 32mo, about $4\frac{1}{8} \times 8$; 32mo, about $4\frac{3}{4} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$; oblong 32mo, about $5\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$; 24mo, about $5\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$; oblong 24mo, about $5\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{3}{4}$; 16mo, about $6\frac{1}{4} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$; small 12mo, 7×5 .

FATHER LASANCE'S PRAYER-BOOKS

	Cloth.	Leather. Gilt.
MY PRAYER-BOOK: HAPPINESS IN GOODNESS. Reflections, Counsels, Prayers and Devotions. 16mo.	1 25	1 75—2 50
MY PRAYER-BOOK. India Paper edition. 16mo.		2 00—5 00
MY PRAYER-BOOK. India Paper edition. With Epistles and Gospels. 16mo.		2 25—2 75

	<i>Cloth.</i>	<i>Leather, Gilt.</i>
BLESSED SACRAMENT BOOK. Offers a larger and greater variety of prayers than any other book in English. Large 16mo.	1 50	2 00—4 50
WITH GOD. A Book of Prayers and Reflections. 16mo.	1 25	1 75—5 00
THE YOUNG MAN'S GUIDE. For manly boys and young men. Oblong 34mo.	0 75	1 25—1 75
THE CATHOLIC GIRL'S GUIDE. Counsels for Girls in the Ordinary Walks of Life and in Particular for the Children of Mary. Oblong 16mo.	1 25	1 75—2 50
PRAYER-BOOK FOR RELIGIOUS. A complete manual of prayers for members of all religious communities. Small 12mo. <i>net</i> ,	1 50	2 50
THOUGHTS ON THE RELIGIOUS LIFE. Reflections on the General Principles of the Religious Life, on Perfect Charity. Small 12mo. <i>net</i> ,	1 50	2 50
VISITS TO JESUS IN THE TABERNACLE. Hours and Half-Hours of Adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. 16mo.	1 25	1 75—2 75
MANUAL OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST. Conferences on the Blessed Sacrament and Eucharistic Devotions. Oblong 24mo.	0 75	1 25
SHORT VISITS TO THE BLESSED SACRAMENT. Oblong 32mo.	0 25	0 00
MASS DEVOTIONS, AND READINGS ON THE MASS. Twelve methods of hearing Mass. Oblong 24mo.	0 75	1 25
THE SACRED HEART BOOK. Ob. 24mo.	0 75	1 25
LITTLE MANUAL OF ST. ANTHONY. Oblong 32mo.	0 25	0 00
A PIOUS PREPARATION FOR FIRST HOLY COMMUNION. 16mo.	0 75	1 25

PRAYER-BOOKS FOR GENERAL USE

ALL FOR JESUS. With Epistles and Gospels. Small 32mo.	0 30	0 40—4 00
BREAD OF LIFE, THE. A Complete Communion Book for Catholics. By Rev. F. WILLAM. Oblong 24mo.	0 75	1 25
COME, LET US ADORE. A Eucharistic Manual. By Rev. B. HAMMER, O.F.M. Small 32mo.	0 75	1 25
DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS BY ST. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI. A Complete Manual of Pious Exercises for Every Day, Every Week, and Every Month. WARD. 16mo.	1 25	1 75
DEVOTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE SICK ROOM. A Book for Every Catholic Family. By Rev. J. A. KREBS, C.SS.R. 12mo.	1 25	
DOMINICAN MISSION BOOK. By a Dominican Father. 16mo.	0 75	1 50—2 00

	<i>Cloth.</i>	<i>Leather. Gilt.</i>
EUCCHARISTIC SOUL ELEVATIONS. Thoughts and Texts Gleaned from Holy Writ. By Rev. W. F. STADELMAN, C.S.Sp. Oblong 24mo.	0 60	0 90
FLOWERS OF PIETY. Approved Prayers for Catholics. 48mo.	0 30	0 30—3 25
FOLLOWING OF CHRIST, THE. THOMAS A KEMPIS. With Reflections. 32mo.	0 40	0 60—2 00
FOLLOWING OF CHRIST, THE. THOMAS A KEMPIS. Without Reflections. 32mo.	0 25	0 55—1 75
FOLLOWING OF CHRIST, THE. By THOMAS A KEMPIS. Illustrated. India Paper, Edition de Luxe. 32mo.		1 25—3 75
GARLAND OF PRAYER, THE. Contains Nuptial Mass. 32mo.		1 25—4 50
GOLDEN KEY TO HEAVEN. With Epistles and Gospels. Small 32mo.	0 30	0 60—1 30
HELP FOR THE POOR SOULS IN PUR- GATORY. ACKERMANN. Small 32mo.	0 60	1 00
HOLY HOUR OF ADORATION, THE. By RIGHT Rev. W. STANG, D.D. Oblong 24mo.	0 60	0 90
IMITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN. After the model of the "Imitation of Christ." Small 32mo.	0 60	1 00
IMITATION OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS. ARNOUDT, S.J. 16mo. <i>net.</i>	1.25	2 75
INTRODUCTION TO A DEVOUT LIFE. By St. FRANCIS DE SALES. Small 32mo.	0 50	1 00
KEY OF HEAVEN, THE. With Epistles and Gospels. 48mo.	0 25	0 40—6 00
LITTLE MASS BOOK. By RIGHT Rev. MGR. J. S. M. LYNCH. Paper. 32mo.	0 05	
MANUAL OF THE HOLY NAME. 24mo.	0 50	1 10
MANUAL OF THE SACRED HEART, NEW. Oblong 24mo.	0 25	0 75—1 35
MANUAL OF ST. ANTHONY, NEW. 32mo.	0 50	0 75
MANUAL OF ST. JOSEPH, LITTLE. By MGR. A. A. LINGS. Oblong 32mo.	0 25	0 60
MISSION-BOOK FOR THE MARRIED. By Rev. F. GIRARDEY, C.S.S.R. 32mo.	0 50	1 00
MISSION-BOOK FOR THE SINGLE. By Rev. F. GIRARDEY, C.S.S.R. 32mo.	0 50	1 00
MISSION BOOK OF THE REDEMPTO- RIST FATHERS, THE. 32mo.	0 50	1 00
MISSION REMEMBRANCE OF THE RE- DEMPTORIST FATHERS. By Rev. P. GEIERMANN. 32mo.	0 50	1 00—1 50
OFFICE OF THE HOLY WEEK. 16mo.	0 45	0 90—1 10
OUR FAVORITE DEVOTIONS. By RIGHT Rev. MGR. A. A. LINGS. Oblong 24mo.	0 75	1 20
OUR FAVORITE DEVOTIONS. By RIGHT Rev. MGR. A. A. LINGS. India Paper edition. Oblong 24mo.		1 50—2 50
OUR FAVORITE NOVENAS. By RIGHT Rev. MGR. A. A. LINGS. Oblong 24mo.	0 75	1 20
OUR FAVORITE NOVENAS. LINGS. India Paper edition. Oblong 24mo.		1 50—2 50

	<i>Cloth.</i>	<i>Leather. Gilt.</i>
OUR MONTHLY DEVOTIONS. By RIGHT		
Rev. M ^r . A. A. LINGS. 16mo.	1 25	2 00
PEARLS OF PRAYER. Measures only		
1½ x 2 inches.	0 45	0 60—2 25
POCKET COMPANION. Oblong 48mo.	0 10	0 25—1 00
PRACTICAL CATHOLIC, THE. FATHER		
PALAU. Oblong 24mo.	0 60	1 00—1 60
PRACTICAL CATHOLIC, THE. India Paper		
edition with illustrations. Oblong 24mo.		1 25—3 00
SERAPHIC GUIDE, THE. 24mo.	0 60	0 75
VEST POCKET GEMS OF DEVOTION.		
Oblong 32mo.	0 20	0 35—3 00
VEST POCKET GEMS OF DEVOTION.		
With Epistles and Gospels. Oblong 32mo.	0 25	0 50—4 50
VISITS TO THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT AND TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. By St. ALPHONSUS LIGUORI.		
32mo.	0 35	0 75—1 00
PRAYER-BOOKS WITH LARGE TYPE		
KEY OF HEAVEN. Epistles, Gospels. 24mo.	0 45	0 90—3 75
KEY OF HEAVEN. Epistles, Gospels. 32mo.	0 30	0 65—1 85
POCKET MANUAL. Ep. and Gosp. Ob. 32mo.	0 25	0 50—1 85
WAY TO HEAVEN, THE. 32mo.	0 35	0 75—1 85
FOR CHILDREN AND FIRST COMMUNICANTS		
BOYS' AND GIRLS' MISSION-BOOK.		
Large 48mo.	0 35	0 75
BREAD OF ANGELS. Especially Suited for First Communicants. By Rev. B. HAMMER, O.F.M. Large 48mo.	0 25	0 65—4 50
CHILD OF MARY, THE. Especially for the Use of First Communicants. 32mo.	0 45	0 95—2 00
CHILDREN'S PRAYER-BOOK, THE. By Rev. P. J. SLOAN. Small 32mo.	0 20	0 60
CHILD'S PRAYER-BOOK, THE. 48mo.	0 15	0 40—0 90
DEVOUT CHILD, THE. With 18 full-page illustrations of the Mass. 48mo.	0 10	
FIRST COMMUNICANT'S MANUAL. Small 32mo.	0 35	0 65—2 50
FIRST COMMUNION PRAYER-BOOK FOR SMALL CHILDREN. By Rev. P. J. SLOAN. Small 32mo.	0 20	0 50
LITTLE ALTAR BOY'S MANUAL.	0 25	0 60
LITTLE FIRST COMMUNICANT, THE. By Rev. B. HAMMER, O.F.M. Small 32mo.	0 25	0 65
PIOUS CHILD, THE. With 18 full-page illustrations of the Mass. 48mo.	0 12	0 45
SHORT PRAYERS FOR YOUNG CATHOLICS. With Epistles and Gospels. 48mo.	0 20	0 45—1 90
SODALIST'S VADE MECUM, THE. 32mo.	0 40	0 65

A copy of "Catholic Books in English" now in print in America and Europe will be sent on receipt of 50 cents. Bound in cloth, it contains over 5,000 titles and over 800 illustrations of authors.



ANCIENT, SUBTERRANEAN, AND MODERN ROME

IN WORD AND PICTURE

By Rev. ALBERT KUHN, O.S.B., D.D.

Preface by Cardinal Gibbons

Published in 18 parts, bi-monthly

Each, 35 cents, postpaid

Subscription by the year, entitling you to
6 parts, \$2.00 postpaid

*Subscription to the Complete Work,
18 parts, \$6.00*

938 text illustrations, 40 full-page illustrations,
3 plans of Rome in colors

A masterly production of the first class

The crown-jewel of a Catholic's library

The most important Catholic work issued
in many years

Dr. Kuhn's "ROMA" presents Rome
in its entirety. It is the best and most thorough
production of its kind. It comprises everything; it
is clear in its expression, written in a brilliant but
popular style, with hundreds of splendid illustrations.

ORDER BLANK

Messrs. BENZIGER BROTHERS,

36-38 Barclay St., New York

I subscribe herewith to "ROMA," by Rev. Albert
Kuhn, O.S.B., D.D., and enclose

\$..... } to pay for 6 parts (to appear in one year)
 } to pay for 18 parts (complete work)

(Enclose \$2.00 for 6 parts in one year and \$6.00
if you pay for the complete work in advance.)

Name.....

Address.....

Town.....

State.....

Date.....

Copyright Books Up-to-date Bindings
Free by mail, 50 cents per volume
50 volumes assorted, \$22.50

LIBERAL DISCOUNT TO THE REV. CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

The Best and Cheapest Catholic Books Published

NOVELS

Dion and the Sibyls. Miles Keon.
 Marcella Grace. Rosa Mulholland.

Fabiola. Cardinal Wiseman.
 Fabiola's Sisters. Adapted by A. C. Clarke.

The Circus Rider's Daughter. F. v. Brackel.

A high-class novel—a love-story that every reader will feel better for having read.

Bond and Free. Jean Connor.

Miss Erin. M. E. Francis.

The Light of His Countenance. Jerome Harte.

The Hellness of Cronenstein. Countess Hahn-Hahn.

In God's Good Time. H. M. Ross.

My Lady Beatrice. Frances Cooke.

A story vivid in characterization and intense in interest.

The Other Miss Lisle. M. C. Martin.

The Shadow of Eversleigh. Jane Lansdowne.

A weird tale quaintly told.

The Secret of the Green Vase. Frances Cooke.

So As By Fire. Jean Connor.

Agatha's Hard Saying. Rosa Mulholland.

Rosa Mulholland's best story.

Her Journey's End. Frances Cooke.

A story of mystery, of strife and struggle, of petty jealousy and sublime devotion.

Connor D'Arcy's Struggles. M. W. Bertholds.

The Outlaw of Camargue. A. de Lamothe.

Rose of the World. M. C. Martin.

A capital novel, with plenty of go in it.

The Unblinden Guest. Frances Cooke.

A tale of hearts that love, suffer, and win.

The Monk's Pardon. Raoul de Navery.

Idols; or, The Secret of the Rue Chaussee d'Antin. Raoul de Navery.

Forgive and Forget. Ernst Lingen.

A sweet and wholesome love story.

The Turn of the Tide. Mary Agatha Gray.

The Test of Courage. H. M. Ross.

The Tempest of the Heart. Mary Agatha Gray.

RELIGIOUS BOOKS

Lives of the Saints, for Every Day. Adapted from Rev. Alban Butler.

Life of Christ. Rev. M. v. Cochem.

Adoration of the Bl. Sacrament. Rev. A. Tesnière.

Explanation of the Creed. Rev. H. Rolfus.

Explanation of the Commandments. Rev. H. Rolfus.

Explanation of the Sacraments. Rev. H. Rolfus.

Explanation of the Mass. Rev. M. v. Cochem.

Helps to a Spiritual Life. Rev. J. Schneider.

How to Comfort the Sick. Rev. J. A. Krebs.

Life of the Blessed Virgin. Rev. B. Rohner.

Lourdes. Rev. R. F. Clarke, S.J.

Explanation of Catholic Morals. Rev. J. H. Stapleton.

More Short Spiritual Readings. Madame Cecilia.

St. Anthony. Rev. Thos. Ward.

St. Francis Assisi, Social Reformer. Rev. L. L. Dubois.

The Secret of Sanctity. St. Francis de Sales.

Veneration of the Blessed Virgin. Rev. B. Rohner.

Short Meditations for Every Day. Abbé Lasausse.

History of the Catholic Church. Rev. L. C. Businger.

The Sacred Heart Studied in the Sacred Scriptures. Rev. H. Saintrain.

History of the Protestant Reformation. W. Cobbett.

The True Spouse of Christ. St. Alphonsus Liguori.

The New Testament.

Any book sent postpaid on receipt of price

\$22.50

ERGY AND RELIGIOUS

Books Published

ve and Forget. Ernst
gen.
sweet and wholesome love

Turn of the Tide. Mary
tha Gray.

Test of Courage. H. M.

Tempest of the Heart.
Agatha Gray.

RELIGIOUS BOOKS

of the Saints, for Every
Adapted from Rev. Alban

Christ. Rev. M. V. Cochem.
man of the Bl. Sacrament.
A. Toulère.

ation of the Creed. Rev.
Rolfus.

ation of the Command-
ments. Rev. H. Rolfus.

ation of the Sacraments.
H. Rolfus.

ation of the Mass. Rev.
Cochem.

to a Spiritual Life. Rev.
Rolfus.

Comfort the Sick. Rev.
Krebs.

the Blessed Virgin. Rev.
Rolfus.

Rev. R. F. Clarke, S.J.
tion of Catholic Morals.

F. H. Stapleton.
Short Spiritual Readings.

St. Cecilia.
St. Anthony. Rev. Thos. Ward.

St. Francis Assisi, Social Re-
former. Rev. L. L. Dubois.

Secret of Sanctity. St.
de Sales.

on of the Blessed Vir-
gin. Rev. B. Rohner.

Meditations for Every
Day. Abbé Lasausse.

of the Catholic Church.
Rev. C. Businger.

Heart Studied in the
Scriptures. Rev. H.

alm.
of the Protestant Ref-
orm. W. Cobbett.

the Spouse of Christ.
Thomas Ligouri.

the Testament.

Price of price

BENZIGER'S STANDARD FIFTY CENT LIBRARY

FOR EVERYBODY

NOVELS AND RELIGIOUS BOOKS BY THE BEST CATHOLIC AUTHORS

Copyright Books

Up-to-date Bindings

Free by mail, 50 cents per volume

50 volumes assorted,

\$22.50

LIBERAL DISCOUNT TO THE REV. CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

The Best and Cheapest Catholic Books Published

NOVELS

Dion and the Sibyls. Miles Keon.
Marcella Grace. Rosa Mulholland.

Fabiola. Cardinal Wiseman.
Fabiola's Sisters. Adapted by A. C. Clarke.

The Circus Rider's Daughter.
F. v. Brackel.

A high-class novel—a love-story that every reader will feel better for having read.

Bond and Free. Jean Connor.
Miss Erin. M. E. Francis.

The Light of His Countenance.
Jerome Harte.

The Hellress of Cronenstein.
Countess Hahn-Hahn.

In God's Good Time. H. M. Ross.
My Lady Beatrice. Frances Cooke.

A story vivid in characterization and intense in interest.

The Other Miss Lisle. M. C. Martin.

The Shadow of Eversleigh. Jane Lansdowne.

A weird tale quaintly told.

The Secret of the Green Vase.
Frances Cooke.

So As By Fire. Jean Connor.
Agatha's Hard Saying. Rosa Mulholland.

Rosa Mulholland's best story.

Her Journey's End. Frances Cooke.

A story of mystery, of strife and struggle, of petty jealousy and sublime devotion.

Connor D'Arcy's Struggles. M. W. Bertholds.

The Outlaw of Camargue. A. de Lamothé.

Rose of the World. M. C. Martin.

A capital novel, with plenty of go in it.

The Unbidden Guest. Frances Cooke.

A tale of hearts that love, suffer, and win.

The Monk's Pardon. Raoul de Navey.
Jois; or, The Secret of the Rue Chaussée d'Antin. Raoul de Navey.

Forgive and Forget. Ernst Lingen.

A sweet and wholesome love story.

The Turn of the Tide. Mary Agatha Gray.

The Test of Courage. H. M. Ross.

The Tempest of the Heart.
Mary Agatha Gray.

RELIGIOUS BOOKS

Lives of the Saints, for Every Day. Adapted from Rev. Alban Butler.

Life of Christ. Rev. M. v. Cochem.

Adoration of the Bl. Sacrament.
Rev. A. Tesnière.

Explanation of the Creed. Rev. H. Rolfus.

Explanation of the Commandments. Rev. H. Rolfus.

Explanation of the Sacraments.
Rev. H. Rolfus.

Explanation of the Mass. Rev. M. v. Cochem.

Helps to a Spiritual Life. Rev. J. Schneider.

How to Comfort the Sick. Rev. J. A. Krebs.

Life of the Blessed Virgin. Rev. B. Rohner.

Lourdes. Rev. R. F. Clarke, S.J.

Explanation of Catholic Morals.
Rev. J. H. Stapleton.

More Short Spiritual Readings.
Madame Cecilia.

St. Anthony. Rev. Thos. Ward.

St. Francis Assisi. Social Reformer. Rev. L. L. Dubois.

The Secret of Sanctity. St. Francis de Sales.

Veneration of the Blessed Virgin. Rev. B. Rohner.

Short Meditations for Every Day. Abbé Lasausse.

History of the Catholic Church.
Rev. L. C. Businger.

The Sacred Heart Studied in the Sacred Scriptures. Rev. H. Saintrain.

History of the Protestant Reformation. W. Cobbett.

The True Spouse of Christ.
St. Alphonsus Liguori.

The New Testament.

Any book sent postpaid on receipt of price